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ABSTRACT

Part of the "Teaching Young People to be Critical Series," this booklet defines and analyzes humor for children in light of theories of philosophers Ludwig Wittenstein and John Dewey. Intended for individual or small group work, the objectives are threefold: reading improvement, reading enjoyment, and student involvement in making the leap from abstractions to practicalities in dealing with some of life's more common enigmas. Humor is produced by the thought that there is a mistake, but one which is not bad or harmful. This engenders laughter and good feelings. It is largely based on things we cannot understand, such as contradiction, nonsense, illusion, deviation from the usual, among others. The author's intent is to help children learn to analyze their humor, which will aid in analyzing the kinds of mistakes they make. In doing this, the child will realize that much of what he thinks is true is really nonsense. There are many techniques used to create humor, and the author spends the remainder of the book defining and analyzing them. Among those discussed are accident humor, ambiguity humor, behavior, caricature humor, circular humor, conceit humor, connotation humor, contradiction humor, and deviation humor, concluding with a discussion of forbidden, or hurtful, value terms used as humor. (CK)

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HUMOR

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

by
Warren Shibles
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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BOOKS FOR PROFESSIONALS AND ADULTS

Rational Love, 1978
Humor: A Comprehensive Classification and Analysis, 1978
Wittgenstein, Language and Philosophy, 1970
Death: An Interdisciplinary Analysis, 1974
Emotion, 1974
Metaphor: An Annotated Bibliography and History, 1971
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"To be playful and serious at the same time is possible, and it defines the ideal mental condition." (John Dewey)

"My aim is to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense." (Wittgenstein)

"What is your aim in philosophy (critical thinking)? — To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle." (Wittgenstein)

"The man of greatest humor is he who has the most curious, observant and reflecting mind, who has a mind richly stored with experiences, whose mind is capable of...alertness of movement, springing from point to point." (Menon)

HUMOR
A Critical Analysis
For Children

When Uncle Remus mentioned something about Brer Rabbit's laughing-place, he pictured it in his mind as a sure-enough place that the four-footed creatures had found necessary for their comfort and convenience.

The little boy referred to Brer Rabbit's laughing-place and talked about it in much the same way that he would have talked about Atlanta.

Uncle Remus said, "What you want is a laughing-place, where you can go and tickle yourself and laugh whether you want to laugh or not...Where-abouts is this here place?"

"It is right here where you are," said the little boy. (Uncle Remus)

ANALYSIS OF HUMOR

Humor is a funny thing. And it happens in strange places. When we laugh we are looking into a world of humor where all kinds of unbelievable and unusual things happen. In such a world, if you could see it, you would find that bicycles go backwards, triangles are made of spaghetti, there are peas instead of periods at the end of every sentence, a paper has only one side, and ice cream grows on trees.

In such a world, birds fly underwater, straws are sipped through soda, and cookies make people. And the funny thing about this world is that it is a real world—a real place which you yourself can see and create. All you need to do is go to the laughing-place. Let's go.

To find out where it is, is to find out what humor is and how we create it. Humor will be seen to be the least important thing in the world and the most important thing in the world. Knowing how humor works and how to create it is one of those ideas which can change your life. You will never be the same again. And you wouldn't want to be. How does humor work? Where do we find it? First of all, it is not nowhere. And it doesn't just happen by itself.

You can't laugh when you try to laugh-ha-ha-ha-haha! Here was a little fowl not much bigger than a jay-bird laughing herself blind when there wasn't a thing in the round world for to laugh at. (Uncle Remus)

We do not just laugh. We laugh about something. Humor is not just a feeling inside of us. It is not like a pain. It is not even like a happy pain. Humor is something we think about that makes us laugh. It must involve thought. If there is not thought, there is no humor. Nothing in itself is funny. If there were no people in the world, nothing would be funny. Thus, it is you who make things serious or humorous.

We have you now. We found you out. You are guilty of making fun. Your punishment is to see how you do it. Here is how.

Humor is a thought which causes good feelings and

laughter. Humor is not only thought, not only laughter, but both. First comes the thought, then the feeling. What kind of thoughts produce humor? Only certain kinds of thought can do that.

"What are tarts made of?"
"Pepper mostly," said the cook. *(Alice in Wonderland)*

The tarts sound good don't they?—If you are a sneeze. We do not make tarts out of pepper. It is wrong to do so. This is what makes it humorous to say the tarts are made of pepper. Whenever we make a mistake, error, or deviate somehow, we may create humor, In short, to make humor, just make mistakes. And now we may build the house of humor so as to have a clear view of our laughing-place:

Humor is the thought that there is a mistake, and this then produces laughter and good feelings.

This is almost complete, but the place needs some landscaping and yard work. Let's assume that we have had our tea and tarts and will now clean around a bit. That's a less painful way of saying, "Now, let's do some work."

Humor takes place when we think that a mistake has been made. To be critical, we must see if this is true. Take an example. Suppose a student mistakenly writes on the board: $2+2=5$. This can cause us to laugh. But not this alone, because it may cause the teacher to become angry. Why does one laugh rather than become angry at the mistake? The teacher is thinking, "That is the wrong answer and it is bad." But the pupils who laugh are thinking, "That is the wrong answer, but it is all right. It

doesn't hurt anyone." Thus we must add to our theory:

Humor is produced by the thought that there is a mistake, but one which is not bad or harmful. This then produces laughter and good feelings.

Once the mistake is seen to be harmful, it is no longer humorous. For example, we laugh if someone slips on a banana peel, but stop laughing if he breaks his leg.

Thus, for something to be humorous, we must not take the mistake seriously, or as being bad. If we are too serious we will not laugh at a joke. To be too serious is to say, "This is bad or fearful." There are also many other negative thoughts which block humor. Shakespeare wrote:

Do you know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool? *(King Lear)*

A person can take himself too seriously also. Humor requires that we accept. It is sometimes important for one to be able to laugh at oneself in order to accept oneself. To accept is to say, "I'm OK," or "It's OK." Humor involves the thought that something is a mistake which is OK. That cleans up our garden a little bit so that it is more pleasant and acceptable.

Now, let's be critical again. What kind of mistakes produce humor? There are as many kinds of humor as there are kinds of mistakes.

You've worked hard. Let's go and rest in our laughing-place for awhile. We will have some soup. And for fun we will have a fly in it. This will show the different kinds of funny things that can happen in a laughing-place. We

have even labeled the different kinds, just as we would name the flowers in our garden. You may pick a few that you like best.

TYPES OF HUMOR: FLY IN SOUP JOKES

A person is eating his soup and he says to the waiter: "Waiter, there is a fly in my soup!"

The following are humorous replies by the waiter:

Accident Humor
The fly falls into the soup.

Ambiguity Humor
(Double meanings of words, Pun)
Waiter: Just a moment, I'll unzip it.

Waiter: Then put it (soup or fly?) back.

Behavioral Humor
The waiter put his hand into the soup, pulled out the fly and said, "No, there isn't."

Caricature (Something or someone's faults are stressed in a drawing.)
The person is drawn with his eyes bulging out as he looks at the little fly.

Circular Humor (Saying something which seems like new knowledge, but is just repetition.)
Waiter: It must have gotten stuck.

Waiter: Now you know why we call it "Airplane soup."

Conceit Humor (Relate things which are very different.)
I know, we were out of elephants.

Connotation Humor
(Deal with minor qualities instead of the main ones.)
I know, it gives you a nice buzz, doesn't it?

Don't eat it. It may make you suicidal (like the fly).

Context Deviation Humor (Use a word in the wrong context. Mix different types of words.)
Do you want dinner for two, then?

Serves it right. (Also a pun.)

There have been other martyrs.

It should have been behind bars. (Also a pun.)

Then, don't pay for it (fly or soup?).

I'll call the owner (of the fly or the soup?).

Sorry, the cook forgot to swat the soup.

But, it's still fresh.

Contradiction Humor
There is no way a fly could get into this soup (as another fly drops in the soup).

I get paid not to see things like that.

Defense Mechanism Humor (Odd ways of trying to solve one's problems which do not really work. For example, by telling lies, pretending, anger, and so on.)
Who do you think you are, coming in here, telling me there is a fly in the soup?

That's no fly, that's an excited piece of pepper.

Deviation from Desires
How do you want it done?

Tell me how it tastes.

I thought you might like it that way.

Deviation from the Familiar
Would you like a frog to go with it?

Well, how do you eat it at home?

Deviation from the Ideal
It's the best we could do, sir.

Deviation from the Practical
Wait, I'll get a fly swatter.

Deviation from Purpose
Would you like a fork?

Deviation from Rule
Wasn't that on the menu?

Deviation from Tradition
We always serve them that way.

Deviation from the Usual
Help it out, then.

Escape or Release Humor (Escape from a difficult or embarrassing situation.)
I ask you, what is soup without anything in it?

Exaggeration Humor
First the fly drinks soup, who knows what it will devour next?

Expand Metaphor Humor (Relation of unlike things is developed further.)
Just a minute, we'll screen it.

Defeated Expectation Humor (Expect one thing, but surprised when another appears.)
It won't drink it all.

False Blame Humor
Then put it back.

Ah, your fly is in our good soup?

False Reason Humor
Flies have to eat too, you know.

Couldn't be. We only have flies in summer.

That's no fly. That's our cook.

False Statement Humor
You're wrong. That's not soup.

The cute fellow with the little eyes? It's a raisin. It must be.

Free Association
Yes, flies. How often I have wondered what they could be thinking.

Grammar Deviation Humor
Ah, I see. Inside your soup there is the fly.

In zee sup iz fli.

Unexpected Honesty Humor
Yes, I put it there.

You are quite correct. There it is. That small, black, dirty thing.

Hopelessness Humor (Unable to succeed.)
Waiter replaces soup with another bowl of soup. It also has a fly in it.

Hypocrisy Humor (Pretend to be what you are not.)
Sure, there is. You put it there.

Couldn't have been me. Perhaps someone else served you.

There's a fly that knows good soup.

Impossible Humor
And on the other hand, there isn't a fly in your soup.

Ignorance Humor (Not understanding what is going on.)
Couldn't be. I sprayed it first.

It's all I could find.

What would you prefer it to be in, sir?

Irony (Say the opposite of what you mean.)
I'm glad you told me. Thank you.

Cosmic Irony (Unfair, unlikely, or undeserved things happen.)
Life is indeed cruel.

It's dead. And it's what it liked most.

Irrelevance
Do you think it can float?

Blatant Lie (Obvious lie)
Waiter obviously sees the fly but says, "I see nothing."

There is absolutely no fly in your soup.

It's our policy: One fly per person.

Take Things Too Literally
Just a minute, I'll get some flypaper.

It's our cook. He couldn't hurt a fly.

Logical Fallacies

1. *False Appeal to Pity*
   Just look at that cute little thing with those sad, brown eyes. How could he do any harm?

2. *Change Topic to Avoid Subject*
   Nice weather we are having.

3. *False Assumption*
   The soup is good too.

   We don't charge extra.

   We washed it first.

4. *Doesn't Follow*
   The fly wasn't here before *you* came in.

5. *Refuse to Discuss*
   Sorry, I'm not allowed to chat with the customers.

6. *Relativism* (Thinking that everything is arbitrary, or is as true as anything else.)
   Well, life is absurd anyway, isn't it?

7. *Attack the Person Rather than the Subject*
   Well, you have mud on your feet.

   My, you are observant.

   You obviously need glasses.

8. *To Miss the Main Point*
   Then go light on the salt.

   I have to wait on the people first.

   It was on a diet too.

9. Use of Anger Instead of Reason

Waiter becomes angry with customer and says, "It would have been alright if you hadn't noticed it."

Metaphor Humor (Metaphor is combining unlike things, or unusual statements.)
Life is flies crawling in our soup.

That's the story of my life.

Mimicry (Imitate faults)
Oh, me. Oh, my. Whatever will I do? There is a monster in my soup.

Misclassification Humor
No, that is a spider.

Name Calling Humor
Mr. Perfection, that's who you are.

The villain! (said about the fly).

Nonsense Humor
Waiter fishes for fly with a string noose and says, "Just a minute. I'll get it for you."

Obvious Humor (Say the obvious)
It must have just "dropped in."

I know what to do. Separate them.

Paradox Humor
The fly is and is not in your soup.

Yes, a waiter is one who takes invisible flies out of soup.

Perceptual Humor
Show a picture of soup having been eaten, and small wet fly in the bottom of the bowl.

Delicately remove the fly with tweezers.

Personification (Treat animals or things as if they were people, or people as if they were animals or things.)
It likes soup.

Sorry, I thought you were a Venus-Flytrap. (A fly-eating plant.)

I just can't stand careless flies.

It's just his way of having fun.

It's not a fly, it's a hungry raisin.

Pretense Humor
Waiter turns lights low and says, "I don't see any fly, do you?"

Reduce to Absurdity Humor
I certainly hope it can swim.

Reversal Humor (Reverse a statement or situation.)
No, I'd say the soup was around the fly.

Don't apologize to me.

It's a real fly, all right, but I'm not sure about the soup.

Are you sure the soup isn't in the fly?

Riddle (Asking strange questions, or giving odd answers.)
Q. Why did the fly drown in the soup?
A. Because it couldn't breathe.

Ridicule
Well, you are a complainer, aren't you?

I suppose you prefer butterflies?

Well, a fly-eater. I've heard of them, but I've never actually seen one.

What are you doing staring into your soup, anyway?

Satire
Customer: "Waiter, do you raise these flies yourself?"

Self-Deprecation (Criticize one's own self.)
Sorry, sir. Wrong bowl. That's my soup.

Simile or False Analogy (False comparison using "like" or "as.")
And people all over the world are starving.

Sinking (Treat important as unimportant and trivial as valuable.)
It's an angel in disguise.

What a way to go.

Stereotype Humor (Fixed kind of behavior or action.)
Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. Very kind of you, sir.

Substitution Humor (Replace one word or thing with another. Replace a part for the whole, or whole for a part.)
Waiter returns with a *clean* fly.

Look, a fly. What a terrible restaurant, what a terrible world.

Trick or Deceit
Fooled you, that's a plastic fly.

Understatement Humor
I recommend something else for you, then.

Useless Humor
We have more if you wish.

Value Deviation Humor (Improper, wrong, or immoral statements or behavior. Deviation from what we value.)
Don't worry, it's dead.

Waiter takes a spoon, eats the fly slowly, and says, "Mmmm, not bad at all."

Forbidden Value Term Humor (Forbidden or improper terms.)
It is *nasty* stuff isn't it?

Blatant Vice Humor (Be obviously mean and bad.)
Yes, sir. I'll get our soup-fly remover at once.

Be quiet and eat it, or I'll dump it on your head.

I put it there, and I would do it again.

Well, we have had our soup now. Are you full? Learning about each of the above types of humor will help one to understand humor better. Each type of humor gives a technique for creating humor. We now know some of the names of our flowers. The next step is to learn how to cultivate and grow them to make a beautiful garden.

WAYS TO CREATE HUMOR

We now know that humor is created by deviating from the:

1. expected,
2. familiar,
3. usual,
4. proper,
5. reasonable,
6. intelligible,
7. useful,
8. believed,
9. correct,
10. rules,
11. desired,
12. known,
13. possible,
14. probable,
15. ideal,
16. real,
17. honest,

and so on.

Humor is largely based on things we cannot understand, on contradiction, on nonsense, on meaninglessness, on illusion, on things being what they are not, and not being wnat they are. It is as if things which happen are so strange that we cannot even understand them, and so we react by laughing. We expect one thing to happen and the unexpected happens instead. We water our flowers and they turn into birds. But we told you about that world.

Here are some techniques for creating humor. First create some of the types of jokes just given during your soup-break. You will not understand about some of the types until we discuss them further. But, as a start, create metaphors. A basic form is "A is B," such as, "You (A) are a weed (B)." Just combine any two unlike things like that, and you have both humor and metaphor. Some examples are:

Life is slimy.
Water is lonely.
Space is a box with no top, bottom, or sides.
"E" is yellow.
You are my cup of tea.
You are my bottle of soda.
The world is a duck.
A straight line is a flattened circle.
Jealousy is chemical.

But there are some forms of metaphor other than "A is B." We can have ArB where "r" is some relation:

A causes B	A on B	A and B
A of B	A or B	A to B, and so on.
A in B	A with B	

That is, we can replace "is" in "A is B," with any verb or other relation word. We can say:

Worlds grow on trees.
Once below a time.
Algebra of emotions.

'Tis deepest winter in Lord Timon's purse. (Shakespeare)

Or, we can just describe a word with an adjective or adverb:

Sticky world.
Sincere snow.
Dog day.
Dog-dayed night.

In creating this type of humor, remember that all you have to do is to combine unlike things. This is exactly what poets, as well as comedians do. The combination (metaphor) seems at first to be nonsense, but when we think about it, there may be some sense in which it is true. If we say "You are a green weed," it is false. But, on the other hand, if you are new at a job you are still a bit "green," a young plant. Metaphors are humorous because what appears to be nonsense turns out to make sense.

The types of metaphor are also the types of humor. Each type of humor already given is also a type of metaphor. For example, all deviations are metaphors. Both metaphor and humor try to find connections where none seem to exist. Both seem to be mistakes or puzzles.

Now we know what kinds of things to feed our flowers.

We feed them metaphors. In this way, we can make our garden grow into anything we wish.

Here are some examples of metaphor humor:

Spread jelly on your life.
Young children are all metaphors.
The schoolbook was overmilked.
Mathematics is creating a coat with three sleeves.
Burning water.
Life is bubblegum.
Fur-lined cup.
He gave us a snow-job.
He drove us crackers.
Brat of the morning.
Get crackered.
The German word for cotton means "tree wool."
Birthday suit.
The blood of a grape.
Sleep is a vacation from life.
School is a country club.
What a banana I am.
A toothache tree.
Mountain of mistakes.
Saliva is the Cadillac of the digestive system.
Electricity is soda bubbling through small straws.

The techniques for creating humor are different for each type presented. Some of the ways to create humor are by:

1. metaphor.
2. making harmless mistakes.
3. exaggerating.
4. pretending to be what we are not.
5. deviating.
6. making harmless, false statements.
7. taking the wrong meaning of a word or sentence which has several meanings.

8. saying the reverse of what you mean.
9. mimicking or imitating someone.
10. false analogy.
11. treating people as animals, things, or ideas.
12. treating things or ideas as animals or people.
13. exposing tricks, illusions, or hypocrisy.
14. giving unexpected, or surprise solutions.
15. relating the valuable, or important, to the valueless or trivial.
16. underestimating or understating things.
17. saying irrelevant things.
18. saying or doing things which do not make sense. (create nonsense)
19. being especially honest when it is not expected.
20. misclassifying.
21. combining things of different types.
22. calling harmless, false names.
23. saying what is very obvious.
24. tricking, deceiving, or performing a harmless practical joke.
25. being illogical.
26. being irrational.
27. acting, or speaking differently than other people do.

HUMOR CAN BE USED TO GIVE US KNOWLEDGE AND INSIGHT: AN ANALYSIS OF MIND

"What your wisdom could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light." (Shakespeare)

"Jesters do often prove prophets." (Shakespeare)

Now, look at what we have—a garden of mistakes. But it's just what everyone needs. We need to know the kinds of humor we make, in order to know the kinds of mistakes we can and do make. We often say things that we think are true, which are, in fact, false. Our task, then, is to

show that much of what we think is true, is really nonsense. It is for this reason that the philosopher, Wittgenstein, said:

"My aim is to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent [obvious] nonsense."

This is teaching through humor.

Now, remember that the "fly in my soup" jokes were for fun during a rest-period. We may also use humor to do work, to gain knowledge, and to criticize thinking. We can learn a lot in our laughing-place. It is now time to weed our garden.

Let's take the topic of "mind" and see what humor can tell us about it. But now look out! If you follow this carefully you may find that you will "lose your mind." Would you want that to happen? It might happen anyway. For this is humor alright, but as you will see, it is no joke. Here is the question. It already seems like a *riddle*, or game to *play*:

Do you have a mind?

The answer was easy wasn't it? You perhaps said, "Of course I do!" or "Sure, I do. I'm not a fool, you know," or even, "What kind of an odd question is that?" Have you ever been asked that question before? You may say, "Nobody asks that kind of question." Already, humor is created because we ask a strange question. This is *deviation from the usual* humor. If you think an answer is obvious, then it is asking the obvious, or *obvious humor*. Here is the next question:

How do you know you have a mind?

Have you ever been asked this question before? Is it a funny question to ask, too? What is your answer? In one story the servant, Pigg, described the weather, but by mistake he had put his head inside the cupboard, instead of out of the window. In describing the weather he then said, "Soot black and smells of cheese." This is *mistake humor*. It is not the usual way we describe weather. Is mind like that? Do you stick your head *in* to see the mind? Is the mind a sooty, dark, place? Is it like sticking your head in a closet? Is it like sticking your head out of a window to see the weather of the mind? Does the mind smell like cheese?

These questions are based on *"simile or false analogy humor."* A simile is where you say, "X is *like* Y." "Mind is like cheese," is a simile joke. So far, we *reduced* the idea of mind *to absurdity*. This is *reduce to absurdity humor*. "Weather" is a metaphor in "weather" of the mind. Well, now we have played around a bit. But how *do* you know you have a mind?

What is the mind like?

Is it a thing? Do you ever see it? Do you ever touch it? Does it feel like jello? Is it a thin fluid? Ah, but perhaps you smell it? Do you smell your mind when it rains? "No, that's my hair I smell." It is *category mistake* humor when I mistake my hair for my mind. But if you can't see, feel, smell, or touch your mind, how do you know you have one?

Suppose you say, "But I've always been told I have a mind."

No good. That is illogical, or *false authority humor*. Just because someone tells you you have mind, doesn't

mean you have one. The authority may next tell you you have an invisible elf in your head. Would you believe him too? It is not enough to have someone tell you something. You have to know the argument yourself. How do *you* know that you have a mind? Even if many people think they have a mind, that too is not enough. Because many people think that it is good to smoke, does not make smoking good. It would be a joke to say you have a mind because: "That's what I was taught to say," or "My friends think I have a mind, and that's good enough for me." But, no matter how common or familiar the idea of mind is, you still do not have evidence that you have a mind.

We can't see, smell, taste, or touch mind. But we want so much for the little, harmless-seeming word "mind" to name a thing of some kind, that we say, "It must name some invisible thing inside our heads." "It's there, you just can't see it." No, this won't do.

Let's just use *reduce to absurdity humor* on this. If mind is invisible, how do you know it is? Can you *see* that it is *invisible*? This is *contradiction humor*. You can't see what is invisible. If you could see invisible ghosts it would not be proof, because they are invisible. If you could see invisible ghosts it would not be proof, because they are invisible. Now, if mind is invisible where is it? Invisible things do not have visible boundaries. Is the mind in your head, or in your shoulder? It's invisible so you don't know. Perhaps your mind follows you a few feet behind you as you walk? Is your mind in your foot? Is it in your pocket?

"Reach in your pocket and let me have a look at your mind." "Sorry, I put it in my lunch box." "Oh, I lost my mind." "Maybe your mind is in with your peanut butter sandwiches." "Then you better be careful you don't eat it." "I wonder what it tastes like?"

Have you ever heard a conversation like this? We have begun to reduce the idea of mind to absurdity.

If mind were spiritual, or like an invisible ghost, we would not know if it is "in" our head, or "in" the wastebasket. But if it has no boundaries, mind can't be *in* a head, *in* a wastebasket, or *in* anything at all. It has no place, and so cannot be *in* anything. We can't even throw it away. We cannot ask "Where is it?" It is *category mistake humor* to ask "Where?" when it does not apply. And if mind has no place, then it makes no sense to say, "I *have*, or I *possess* a mind." It doesn't make sense to say, "I have a mind, but I don't have it anywhere." That is a misuse of language and leads to humor.

Do you know why it is so difficult to answer the question, "Do you have a mind?" It's because you assume that you must have one. Now, what we find is:

There is no mind.

It is humorous to say this, because it is the opposite of what we have always been told. We do not have evidence or proof that we have mind. Even though we have been told all of our lives that we have one, that is not evidence. We are so *familiar* with the idea of mind that we just wrongly *assume* that we have one. This false belief, then, allows us to create jokes about mind. But don't feel bad about all this. After all, if you have no mind, you can't lose it. Remember what Wittgenstein said earlier:

"My aim is to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent [obvious] nonsense."

That is what we are doing here. We are trying to show that our belief in mind is disguised nonsense, and we are reducing it to obvious humor—that is, insight humor. Several philosophers wrote about mind:

Mind is a ghost in the machine. (G. Ryle)

The phrase "in the mind" can and should always be dispensed with. [*not used*] (G. Ryle)

Mental processes just are queer. (Wittgenstein)

The mistaken use is only the one where "mind" is treated as a thing, or entity, inside of us. It is a *naming fallacy* to think that all words must name things. Does "when?" name a thing? Does "running" name a thing? So we can make a name-calling, or *naming fallacy, joke* out of this as follows:

Q. What's on your mind?
A. Some dust.

This mistakenly treats mind as a thing. It also is *ambiguity humor,* or *pun,* because "on your mind" has a double meaning. The above answer took the wrong meaning. It took "on your mind" literally. This is *taking things literally humor,* also. There are lots of jokes like that, for example:

"He stood on his head."
"Wasn't there any other place to stand?"

The problem with "mind" is that we often do not realize we are taking the word literally, or in the wrong sense. Not all uses of the word "mind" are disguised or hidden jokes. We know what is meant by the following:

"Mind the store," means "Take care of the store."

"Mind your manners," means "Behave," or "Obey the rules of behavior."

"He has a good mind," means "He thinks well."

These uses are alright. If "mind" refers to thinking, and not a thing separate from thinking, then there is no problem. But it is a *category mistake joke* to say, "Because I know what is meant by 'Mind the store,' I therefore have a mind." We erroneously think that because some uses of mind are OK, that all uses of mind are OK. It is no good to say, "Well, I and my friends use the word 'mind' all the time and we know what we mean." That is a category mistake. It is dogmatic. Some uses of "mind" are OK, some are not.

People often say:

"I think with my mind," or

"I have ideas in my mind."

These two sentences show that they think that mind is separate from thinking. They think there are two things here: 1) thinking, *and* 2) mind. So, by "mind," they cannot mean just "thinking." They think that mind is a thing other than thinking. And they think that mind is separate from the brain. The conclusion is that people do misuse the word "mind," and they do talk as if it were a mystical thing. Such talk is like a fairy-tale. The philosopher, Gilbert Ryle, calls such talk about mind as a thing, "The fairy machinery of the mind." To talk about

mind seriously is like telling jokes or taking fairy-tales seriously.

You can still think without having a mind. If all you mean by "mind" is "thinking," then there is no mind, just thinking. You have one thing (mind) not two things (thinking and mind). To say you have no mind, does not mean you don't think. One reason why some poeple think they have a mind is because they let "mind" mean "thinking." Because they know they think, they erroneously think they have a mind.

You don't need a mind in order to think. It is not like, "I need a knife in order to spread the butter," therefore "I need a mind in order to think." That is a *false analogy or simile joke.*

Some people do humorously say, "I think with my hands." You don't need mind to think with. You don't know what it is, so it doesn't explain anything. Suppose you walk across a room first with a mind, then without a mind. Could you? What would it be like to do it without a mind? Would you be lighter? What would it be like to walk across a room *with* a mind? If there were no mind, it wouldn't make any difference. Mind doesn't do anything. In short,

Mind bakes no bread.

We want to say, "Well, something must have *caused* me to think." Yes, we can say that. But what or who caused you to think? To be honest, we can admit that we do not yet know what causes us to think, or how chemical processes become thought. Thus, we cannot say that mind causes us to think. Mind is a *false cause.* But mind is not a thing, anyway, and we don't know what we mean by it.

Thus, we can't say mind causes us to think.

One way of solving some problems is to show that the question doesn't make any sense. If we don't know what the question means, then we can't very well answer it. The following question is just such a meaningless question. It is a trick question, or joke riddle, which some people erroneously take to be a genuine question. The meaningless question is:

Do you have a mind?

It is meaningless because we don't know what the word "mind" means. Also we don't know what it would mean, or be like, to have one. It is like asking:

Do you have a quink? Well, do you?

Now, actually, we must correct ourselves. We can't say there is no mind, because we don't know what mind is. We can say neither that a "quink" does, nor that it does not, exist. We can only say that they are nonsense terms, or don't make sense:

Mind is nonsense.

You now know some of the arguments about mind. The following jokes can help us to understand these arguments even more:

HOW TO JOKE YOURSELF OUT OF YOUR MIND. MIND JOKES BY TYPE:

1. Reduction to Absurdity Humor (Show that the consequences are things we would not accept.)

How many minds do you have? Three? Ten?

Some think that man needs to have mind so that he will be superior to animals. If so, why not be superior to

everyone else as well, and have 10,000 minds? We wouldn't be superior to animals anyway, because some of them can see, and smell better, and have abilities we do not have.

If you need a mind in order to cause you to think, do you need a mind to cause your mind to think?

Maybe we are all part of one big mind.

The mind is blue with green spots.

If I move, I must have a mind. Then, if a fly-eating plant moves, it must have a mind. What do stones think as they tumble down the hill?

Do rocking chairs have minds? Do they think of rocks?

"I have a mind." Treat this statement as if made by a "mental" patient. Ask, "When did you first notice that? Does this vision come to you often?"

If we don't know that ants have minds what makes us think humans have minds?

Is your mind in your teeth?

Are there teeth in your mind?

He has a fat mind.

Is your mind in your foot?

Does your mind belong to you or is it borrowed?

Toothless mind.

2. Personification Humor

The mind is not a "man in the machine." (Personification) (G. Ryle)

The mind is not a "ghost" in the machine. (G. Ryle)

3. Simile Humor (False Analogy or False Likenesses)

"My mind is made up," is not like "My bed is made up."

"I lost my mind," is not like "I lost my hat."

"My mind is in my head," is not like "My nickel is in my pocket."

"I have ideas in my mind," is not like "I store boxes in my warehouse."

"He is out of his mind," is not like "He is out of his house."

"I read books," is not like "I read minds."

"I think with my mind," is not like "I chew with my teeth."

"Mental process," is not like "Cooking process."

"Mind is a thing," is not like "Thinking is a thing," is not like "A duck is a thing."

"I think with my mind," is not like "I write with my pencil."

"Ideas in my mind," is not like "Eggs in my basket." (Mind is often thought of as a container or bucket which holds ideas. There is no evidence for, or proof of, there being such a container. This is called the mistaken "container theory of mind.")

"What's on your mind?" is not like "What's on the stove?"

It is as if a salesman came around and talked everyone into wanting a mind. We each bought one.

There is no place to seek the mind; It is like the footprints of the birds in the sky. (Oriental poem)

4. Circular Humor (Seeming to say something new, but just repeating oneself in different words.)

We know we have a *mind* because we have *mental* processes. (But "mental" means the same thing as mind, and so there is no argument at all. It is like saying "Mind is mind."

"I have a mind. I should know—I have it don't I?" (This, also, is no argument, just a repetition of the question. Repetition does not advance arguments.

5. Taking Things Literally Humor (We take false statements as if they were true. Or, we take metaphors literally. It is like ambiguity and pun where a word has two different meanings and we take the wrong meaning.)

Distorted mind.

Warped mind.

Disturbed mind.

"I have ideas in my mind," or "I have a mind." (As a thing.) (This is now an example of a joke. Before we gave our arguments about mind, it would have been a common and true statement. So here we have again reduced disguised nonsense to obvious nonsense. We showed that what we take as true or literal is only a false simile or metaphor.)

6. Metaphor Humor (Combine unlike terms or words from different contexts.)

Cobwebs of the mind.

Dirty mind. Clean mind.

Pure mind.

He has the mind of a snail. (Here this can mean that he thinks slowly, or that he literally has a snail-mind-thing in his head.)

7. Contradiction Humor

Mental patients do not have minds. (It seems like a contradiction, but no one has a mind, so it is true.)

The unconscious mind is defined as that which we cannot know. (So how do we know we have an unconscious mind?)

It [truth] cannot be attained by mind; It is not to be sought after through mindlessness. (Japanese poem)

8. Irony Humor (Saying the reverse of what you mean. The opposite of what we expect, happens.)

Mindlessness. (We think this is absurd, but it turns out to be the case. That is, no one has a mind and so all are mindless.)

9. Reversal Humor (Turn a situation, belief, or sentence around.)

"Only fools have minds." (Because there aren't any minds.)

You can have a thought without a mind, but you can't have a mind with, or without, a thought.

Conclusion

You have seen what can happen in the laughing-place. When you are there you can laugh so hard you even "lose your mind." And now you have no mind. We have begun to weed our garden. Do you feel better now with what you have accomplished? Are you the same person your were before? Is mind itself just a laughing place?

A Look At The World of Humor

It is now time to take a closer look at the various kinds of humor. There are as many kinds of humor as there are mistakes we can make. An examination of each type will show how it works and also how to create humor. The types of humor overlap. Are you ready now? Who knows what you will lose or gain this time? Will you be a yet different person when you are through? We'll see. Let's go.

ACCIDENT HUMOR (Non-serious accidents)

He is so unlucky that he runs into accidents which started out to happen to somebody else. (Don Marquis)

In his confusion he bit a large piece out of his teacup instead of the bread-and-butter. (Alice in Wonderland)

This is an accident. If it is seen as harmless it fits our formula for humor:

Humor is produced by the thought that there is a mistake, but one which is not bad or harmful.

Here, the accident seems harmless enough. His teeth seem not to have been knocked out, and no one says the cup is precious. The mistake is as follows: There is deviation from what we expect. We expect a sip, not a bite. There is deviation from purpose, that of drinking tea. When someone slips on some jello he goes flying about in the air. That is not the usual or best way to walk. The

result looks like disorder or chaos. A new, funny, or odd, unexpected, purposeless, chaotic world is created. There is purposelessness in a purposeful world. There is deviation from, or defeat of, our intentions. If an important person slips, it can be humorous to see such a dignified person slip on common, insignificant jello. This would be called *sinking humor.* Remember, though, that if one breaks a leg, it is taken seriously and ceases to be humorous. There may be other reasons why someone does not laugh at any joke. He may have thoughts about other things at the time. Whether or not we laugh depends on all of our thoughts, not just the thought that there is a mistake.

We may laugh because the person who accidently slips is someone we do not like. In this case we may laugh *at* the person, rather than at the mistake. This is not humor. It is like thinking, "He made a mistake and that is good, *and* it serves him right." It is more revenge than the acceptance needed for humor. It is more like laughter of the cruel madman of the comics. He laughs when cities burn. Laughing at people is not humor. And it does not fit the definition of humor given above. For humor, we need positive, accepting thoughts. Fear, blame, revenge, and other thoughts and emotions, prevent humor.

The world of humor is like a strange mirroring of our own world. Whatever is seen is backwards, upside down, inside out, and sure to be such that no matter what happens it has to be wrong, nonsense, or unexpected. Correct answers are unheard of, and order does not exist at all. Making sense and accomplishing a task never happen. The usual laws of science do not apply in this world. The usual thoughts, actions, statements, rules are all mirrored

out of this world. They are all replaced here by the science—of humor.

In this world there is no fighting, no anger, and no hatred. It just is not allowed. It cannot survive for a moment. That is because to be humorous we have to accept and think the mistakes are OK. If there is fear, or the thought that something is bad, there can be no humor. So it is a laughing-place just like the boy in the Uncle Remus story said. It is:

"a sure-enough place that the four-footed creatures had found necessary for their comfort and convenience."

It is a world of friendliness and love, joy, and acceptance, where nothing can be bad. The ugly and horrible are destroyed in an instant, and turned into warmth and cheer. The impossible is one of the easiest things to do. Problems are all solved by means of a smile. Here, humor yields all knowledge, happiness, and fun. Accident humor helped us to stumble into such a world.

AMBIGUITY HUMOR (Pun) (A word has several different meanings. The wrong meaning is used.)

Q. "Have an accident?"
A. "No thanks, I just had one."

I received a score of 100. Fifty in math, and fifty in reading.

It's so nice out, I think I'll leave it out.

It's jam every *other* day; today isn't the other day, you know. (Alice)

Q. "Does your gun shoot tigers?"
A. "No bullets."

Lost: Umbrella belonging to gentleman with bent rib.

Tom told his father not to work, because Tom wanted a *lolly* pop.

A horse went into a drug store and asked for a blueberry sundae. "I bet you think that it is strange for a horse to come in here and ask for that," it said. "No," replied the waiter, "I like them myself."

What is funny here is not a blueberry sundae, but the fact that a horse can talk. So there is ambiguity. All of these jokes contain words with two or more meanings. The mistake comes because someone uses the wrong meaning. The word may have the same spelling, but mean two different things. It may have the same sound and mean two different things, or the wrong thing may be referred to.

Your gun ends up shooting tigers out of the barrel of the gun, as one would shoot bullets. We are surprised and puzzled when strange things of this sort are suddenly said to happen. Ambiguity humor, or pun, forces unlike things together in this way. A word or sentence is used where it does not usually belong or make sense. We take the wrong sense as if it were literal. It is like taking a metaphor literally. In *Alice*, the Mouse makes the mistake of trying to get the wet ones dry by telling them *dry* history.

BEHAVIOR HUMOR

Any deviation or mistake in the way we move and act. It is not verbal, although all that we see and do, relate to

language. All thought relates to language somehow. But, with behavior humor nothing need be said. All is silent, like the silent movies of Charlie Chaplin. The rule to follow here is:

If you must do something, do it wrong.

It is all acting. We pretend to be what we are not. It is useless, contradictory, unusual, or odd behavior. We boil an egg without water, wash dishes in the bathtub, cross our eyes, wiggle our ears, play catch with two raw eggs, begin counting the grains of sand on the beach, pretend to lift up a house, open a can from the side, and wear gloves on our feet. It creates a rather different kind of world.

CARICATURE HUMOR

Now take, for example, Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit. They are not drawn as they should be. Not all of their whiskers are where they ought to be at all. In fact, the way they are drawn, they might as well be people, just like yourself. But it works both ways. Sometimes animals are drawn to seem like people, and at other times, people are drawn to seem like animals. This is call personification. You never, never do see people walking around with the heads of chickens. Now, I bet you are thinking hard to see if you know of anyone like that.

So caricature distorts the way people really look. Often, faults or cute features are exaggerated. One's good or bad actions may be somehow represented. A miser may be shown putting his pennies in tall piles which nearly fall over.

Someone who is narrow in his thinking, and does not question and inquire, may be represented as a horse with

blinders on. He is only able to look straight ahead, or in one narrow direction. Caricature, then, can show insight or a truth about someone or about a situation. The humor comes as a result of deviation, seeing something as something else. Social and political cartoons (often by deviations) make humorous, yet critical, statements.

Caricature also involves the suggestions made by means of visual lines, colors and shapes. There are visual associations which are communicated. Straight lines, for example, are seen as being rational and logical. Curved, flowing lines are seen as being emotional. Each line, shape, color, and whatever is seen, or drawn, must be examined closely.

One cartoon by Abner Dean illustrates the idea: "Very bad memory." It shows a bird in a nest on a rock. Next to it is another rock with her egg on it.

CIRCULAR HUMOR

Isn't the day as short as it's long? I mean, isn't it the same length? (Carroll, *Sylvie and Bruno)*

Circular statements repeat the same thing in other words. Circular arguments assume what they are supposed to prove. Examples:

Sick people do not feel good.
The rich are wealthy.
You cannot believe liars.
Crooks cannot be trusted.
Death is fatal.
Strange people are odd.
Read this again once more also.
I like eating, but it spoils my appetite.

Such sentences seem to say something, but don't. They make no gain in our knowledge. It is like Brer Rabbit setting out on a trip by running around in a circle. After a while, Brer Rabbit will discover that the scenery still looks very familiar. Many things we say seem to give us new knowledge, but are really circular. "I ought to do my duty," is circular. It says only "I ought to do what I ought to do."

Nearly everything we say can be circular. "I see the tree," can be circular because we cannot see without seeing something, and there cannot be something seen without seeing. Both are needed. The statement is non-circular, also, because I see a tree rather than something else. The trick here, then, is to make sure we do not confuse the circular sense with the non-circular sense.

"A readable book," is circular in that most books have words in them. It is non-circular in that "readable" also means an enjoyable book, or a book which is easy to read.

For example, it is no good to try to define time in terms of other time words. It is circular to say, "Time is minutes, hours, days, past, present, and future." If we do not know what time is, we do not know what any time word means. We need to define time in non-time words.

Circular statements are humorous because they seem to say something, but do not. It is a trick. And the joke may be on us when we do not realize that our own statement is really circular. Here are some examples of circular humor:

I think frying is greasy.

I never take chances. It's too risky.

Whatever happens at all, happens as it should. (Marcus Aurelius)

It is wrong to_____too much. (For instance, It is wrong to talk or do anything at all too much.)

Everything is what it is and not another thing. (G.E. Moore, philosopher)

Morphine puts me to sleep because of it soporific (sleep causing) quality. (Moliere)

If you don't finish, you will never be done.

Boys will be boys.

Hot water heater.

I listen to hear what is said.

All of his acts are *good* because they are virtuous.

He stole it because he is a thief.

He did it because that is just the way he is.

He was mean because he is a bad person.

I know nothing about the weather when I know that it is either raining or not raining. (Wittgenstein, philosopher)

The walls are rather perpendicular today aren't they?

You are a true daughter of your mother.

Q. "Why couldn't you sleep?"
A. "I had insomnia."

Did you know that everything is made of "stuff"?

You get to see a lot if you keep your eyes open.

Have you ever noticed how round circles are?

He who stays in the same spot does not get anywhere.

Q. "What is Jim's last name?"
A. "Jim who?"

I missed my nap. I slept right through it.

Sick humor is terrible.

"Lovely day." "Yes, but it was quite dark last night."

The only difference between a beautiful women and an ugly one is just the way they look.

That ice cube is really cold.

Things seen are things as seen. (Wallace Stevens, poet)

"Why is the train late?" "Because of its speed."

Q. "Which president wore the largest hat?"
A. "The one with the largest head."

If there is a tree in the forest and no one sees it, does it exist? (This already states that there already is a tree in the forest. It assumes what it is supposed to prove.)

Alice asks, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" The Cat replied, "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." "I don't much care where—" Alice said. "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat. "So long as I get *somewhere*," Alice added.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," the Cat replied, "if you only walk long enough."

"It's long," said the Knight, [about his song] "but it's very, *very* beautiful. Everybody that hears me sing it—either it brings *tears* into their eyes, or else—" "Or else what?" said Alice, for the Knight had made a sudden pause. "Or else it doesn't, you know." (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass)*

Roughly speaking, to say of *two* things that they are identical is nonsense, and to say of *one* thing that it is identical with itself is to say nothing at all. (Wittgenstein)

"A thing is identical with itself."—There is no finer example of a useless proposition [statement], which yet is connected with a certain play of the imagination. It is as if in imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted. (Wittgenstein)

CONCEIT HUMOR (Far-fetched descriptions)

Conceit does not refer here to being egotistical. It refers to the combination of very unlike things, such as a sky which looks like spaghetti, and ears which look like a bicycle wheel. These things are so unlike that it is hard to know how they can be related in any way whatsoever. But they often can.

Conceits are just metaphors which combine very dissimilar things. The technique is easy. Just combine opposite things, or the most dissimilar things you can think of. The result, of course, may be curious nonsense. Examples:

The sky looks like a large blue elephant.
The spaghetti tastes like electricity.
Sadness is green.
He walks like a noodle.

CONNOTATION HUMOR

We find that everything we see, or think, has many things which we associate with it. When we see an apple, we associate with it things such as: red, green, cider, teacher, orchard, worm, crunch, and so on. Everything has associations, even a period. A period may be thought of as a raisin, an eye, the head of a nail, a nut, a hole, and so on. Connotation humor works by:

a) deviating from usual associations. Example:

Cats are meow boxes.

b) combining unlike things on the basis of one or more similar connotations. Example:

Your eyes are like pollywogs.

c) showing that similar things are really unlike.

Examples of Connotation Humor:

A foot which goes numb or "falls asleep" may feel like it is full of soda water.

A "touch and go" friendship may be represented by two people trying to walk on eggs.

'F7' (They are talking together.) (Ribot)

Kimono language (instead of the interesting Japanese language.)

A glass of duck (instead of Donald Duck brand orange juice.)

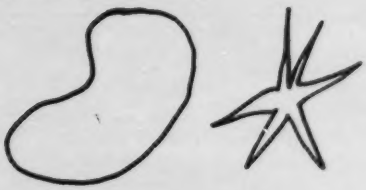
Give me some bee. (honey)

Q. What does cheese say when it has its picture taken?
A. Camera.

Burp gun.

We leave for the ski slopes at 7:30 on the snowflake.

As a test to show that we make associations which we are not aware of making: Give one of the following names to each of these figures: 1.) krick, 2.) boang. Which name goes best with which figure? Do other people agree with you?



Nearly everyone associates the figure on the right with "krick."

Much humor works mainly because of such connotations. We would not understand some jokes unless we knew about connotation. But all humor involves connotation. Because of this, we may relate anything with anything else. This, especially, is how metaphor, humor, and poetry work. The following poems illustrate this:

He speaks too much about everything. A gigantic wrench screws trees into the ground.

As Boys in School
there was glue
and we pasted colored
paper on colored paper
and the glue was like jelly
and had an odor
and the whole school was
glued together for the one
purpose of smelling bad.

we pasted red on orange
on crimson on green and
with a yellow crayon
made eyes, hair and a mouth.
the glue caked on our fingers
and at recess we planted it
wherever it happened to fall.
and this gray lumpy substance
was our education.

(Warren Shibles,
The Promethean Lamp)

One and One Half of a Boy
the entire square room
was contained in his
small round mouth
as his tentacle tongue
slid through the windows
and doors.
sauteed thoughts filled
the room with the quack
of gooseberries, as kumquats
rolled in his belly.
he read book sandwiches
with an ivory comprehension
and he jotted them down forever.
toys were pastries, floors were tables,
people were delicious
and the whole gingerbread house
was insufficient to satisfy
his ravenous, tonguing curiosity.
(Warren Shibles, *Midwestern University Quarterly)*

CONTEXT DEVIATION HUMOR

The sentence only seems queer when one imagines a different language-game for it from the one in which we actually use it. (Wittgenstein)

Humor may be produced when a word is used in the wrong context, or something is done in the wrong context. It is a context deviation to say "Hello" to trees. It is a context mistake to jump from "I am tall," to "I am," or "I exist." "I exist," or "I am," is an incomplete sentence. We must add something, such as, "I am *alive*," or "I am *thin*." In itself, "I exist," does not make sense. It is a context deviation or mistake. Much misuse of language is due to context mistakes.

A word which makes sense in one context may be meaningless, or metaphorical, in another context. For example, "Mind the store,' makes sense, and "I lost my book" makes sense, but not, "I lost my mind." (as a thing) The following is a category-mistake: Q. What's on your mind? A. Some dust. Metaphors are usually category-mistakes, or context deviations. Examples:

3 + orange = chair
1 + apple = 1 fruit
Do you sleep fast or slow?
2 apples + 2 apples = 4 fingers
You can't define a thing, only a term.
Where is your pleasure?
Where is your mind?
How long did the enjoyment last?
May your adjectives last forever.
"Ah, it's beautiful." "No, it's Sunday."
Say "Goodbye" when you go to sleep.
Spread some jelly on your life.
The number "2" is blue.
What do ghosts eat for breakfast?
Is Saturday still in bed?
The number "3" is unhappy.
Is there a screech in your cup?
False fruit.
Intelligent light bulb.

He stirs his coffee with a hot dog.
Do you believe in peanut butter?
He *created* a new pair of shoes and then *created* the world.
Put five cents into a parking meter to see how much you weigh.
Put a quarter into a telephone slot in order to get some peanuts.
He wagged "Goodbye."
Call a cat "Bluebird."
Give him half a thank you.
Say something in cowboy.
In his last life he was a bathroom.
I've never seen a man needing a coat of paint more than you do.
Can you hear the silence?

CONTRADICTION HUMOR. TYPE I. (Combine opposites)

If in the midst of life we are in death, so in sanity we are surrounded by madness. (Wittgenstein)

Barring that natural expression of villainy which we all have, the man looked honest enough. (Mark Twain)

It is difficult to be quiet if you have nothing to do. (Schopenhauer)

This type of humor combines a word with its opposite or its negation. For example:

He is a married bachelor.

It is a legal crime.

It is contradictory because the definitions of the terms contradict. It does not require that we investigate experience. The contradiction is in the definitions of the terms themselves. We could call this "definitional" (or analytic) contradiction. The form often is: "X is not X."

Because these statements are, at first, contradictory, we must try to find some other meaning for them, so that they are not contradictory. A "married bachelor" may, for example, be a married man who acts like a bachelor. The humor comes from finding sense, or meaning, in what seems to be a contradiction. Examples are:

two sided triangle
square circle
enlightened dogma
opulent (rich) poverty
censored education
benevolent (favoring) neutrality
neutral involvement
the real is surreal
instant velocity

Our dogma has improved.
Communication is impossible.
This is not a sentence.
cruel kindness
studied spontaneity
intelligent blunder
silent lecture
true myth
dishonest truth
life after death
female uncle
proven miracle
"Believing what we don't believe does not exhilarate." (Emily Dickinson)
Mind is no mind.
It was hereditary in his family to have no children.
To do nothing is to do everything.
When was *time* created?
He forgets the present.
He was arrested for driving without a vehicle.
The reports of my death are grossly exaggerated. (Mark Twain)

Say it non-verbally.
There is an exception to every rule, including this one.
Writers who write who don't write.
Humor is nonsense which makes sense. (insight humor)
He gave up quitting.
Some politicians are honest liars. (insight humor)
Some patients say they hear "silent screaming" in their heads.

In *Alice in Wonderland* the Dodo says, "Everyone has won, and all must have prizes." The Caterpillar talks of "one side of a mushroom," though they are round.

"I hope you'll enjoy the dinner - such as it is; and that you won't mind the heat - such as it isn't."
"The sentence *sounded* well, but somehow I couldn't quite understand it." (Carroll, *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded)*

CONTRADICTION HUMOR. TYPE II Incongruity and Inconsistency)

No one has ever been truthful about what truthfulness is (Nietzsche)

Distance is a great promoter of admiration. (Diderot)

There need not be direct contradiction here. In incongruity humor it is only required that the terms clash, are inappropriate, or are not in harmony. It may be that the connotations conflict. Examples:

Dear scholars and shoppers.

He is a good, lazy person.

It took a lot of work to make that mess.

Perfect mistake
Iowa porch pigs
Hide cookies behind the toilet.
It's my job to be leisurely.
People are often lonely in crowded rooms or subways.

Adults playing with toys.
She stoops to conquer.
I can resist everything but temptation.
Fall in love with only one identical twin.

The wine-bell is silent.
The heat
of the clock. (Japanese poem)

I like oysters and people.

CONTRADICTION HUMOR. TYPE III. (Contradiction of our experience)

"Three men can't sit side by side on a bench a yard long" states a physical impossibility. (Wittgenstein)

As it becomes warm the iron crow sweats. (Zen saying)

Imagine someone saying: "But I know how tall I am!" and laying his hand on top of his head to prove it. (Wittgenstein)

As soon as thought reflects on itself, what it first discovers is contradiction. (Camus, philosopher)

Sometimes our experience is contradicted by what is done or said. Now suppose Brer Rabbit were to refuse to eat carrots, and eat nothing but blueberries from now on. Can you see him sitting there with his blue teeth and blue, furry mouth? It's not likely. It contradicts what we know about rabbits.

Our knowledge of cause and effect is based on experience, not on mere definition. The philosopher, David Hume, said that we cannot be certain what will happen next. All we know about cause is based on past ex-

perience. Certain things usually go together. Thus he said that cause is just constant, contingent (not absolute), conjunction (association of two or more events). In short, maybe tomorrow rabbits will eat blueberries instead of carrots. But our experience is that carrots, so far, are what rabbits prefer.

This knowledge is not gained by definition, but only by observation and experience. When something different than, or contradictory to our past experience happens, it leads to humor. It makes as much sense as foxes giving birth to rabbits.

Experience contradiction may involve a contradiction between a statement and reality (false statement), or between a statement and: intention, desire, action, expectation, goal, need, reason, emotion, understanding, wishes, perception, and so on.

Type III contradiction of experience, differs from Type I (contradictory definition) or type II (incongruity contradiction.) Here are some examples of type III (contradiction of experience):

Nothing is so firmly believed as that which we least know. (Montaigne)

In Lewis Carroll's *A Tangled Tale,* someone weeps at parting, but the moment he leaves he begins whistling happily.

God's only excuse is that he does not exist. (Stendahl)

Why does it sound queer to say: "For a second he felt deep grief?" (Wittgenstein) (Grief is not the sort of thing that lasts for merely a second.)

In *Through the Looking-Glass* the following account is given:

"Well, in *our* country," said Alice, still panting a little, "you'd generally get to somewhere else - if you ran very fast for a long time as we've been doing."

"A slow sort of country!" said the Queen. "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running *you* can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"

"I'd rather not try, please!" said Alice.

I'll bet you $10 I can quit gambling.

First man: "I like to walk alone."
Second man: "So do I."
First man: "Good, let's walk together."

Mrs. Smith's natural plastic pies.

He only apologizes for things he can't help.

Suicidal people often erroneously think that by committing suicide they will just rid themselves of all of their problems.

One person scolds another rudely.

Often people who fear being disliked actually make themselves disliked.

A "double bind" involves contradictory views. One may be disliked for being jealous, but if he is not jealous, be disliked for not caring.

One may love pain, sadness, or feeling sorry for oneself.

Imaginary gardens with real toads in them.

Q. Why is an elephant and the number seventeen alike?
A. Both are different than the moon.

What was the world like before it was created?

Are you sleeping?

It's not hard to give up smoking. I've done it dozens of times.

"The unconscious" is defined as that which you can never know.

He is working on a theory that there is no language, only invisible ideas.

Don't be superstitious about black cats. All you have to do is make three "X" marks on the ground and it breaks the spell.

This beautiful home is rent-free as long as you kill the rats.

He planted the tree spontaneously.

We'll hang him. That should teach him a lesson.

If they do not take violence off television, a number of angry citizens will storm in and destroy the studio.

I never take time to make words rhyme.

Wouldn't you agree that I'm a person who doesn't care what others think of me?

Did nothing in particular
And did it very well. (W.S. Gilbert)

Orr was crazy and would be grounded. All he had to do

was ask: and as soon as he did he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. (Joseph Heller *Catch-22)*

Never work before breakfast; if you have to work before breakfast, eat your breakfast first. (Josh Billings)

"He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee, "and what do you think he's dreaming about?"

Alice said, "Nobody can guess that."

"Why, about *you*!" Tweedledee explained. *(Through the Looking-Glass)*

DEVIATION HUMOR

"Well, then," the Cat went on, "you see, a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now, I growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore, I'm mad." (Alice in Wonderland)

We notice deviations from what is familiar to us. If someone deviates we even say he is mad or crazy. Suppose Brer Rabbit were to start meowing and acting like a cat. It would be strange. It would be humorous depending upon how we take it. Some kinds of deviations which produce humor are:

Deviation from 1.) desires, 2.) the familiar, 3.) the ideal, 4.) the practical, 5.) purpose, 6.) rules or standards, 7.) the usual.

1. Deviation from Desires, Humor

What is desired least is what is offered. What is most desired is taken away. Desired expectations are not fulfilled. Others desire things we do not think are desirable, for example, spinach milk and fried bread, a book on the history of mouse tails, or to receive a package of chewing gum when a diamond ring is expected.

2. Deviation from the Familiar, Humor

It is not a familiar sight to see someone raise green pigs, or play the vacuum cleaner as a musical instrument. Anything surrealistic deviates from the familiar.

What Alice (in Wonderland) regards as her awful three inch height, the Caterpillar finds most satisfactory. People sometimes say, "The people next door are not like we are.

They must then be crazy." We tend, erroneously, to think that what we are familiar with must be true, and so we laugh at what we are not familiar with. We may call this the fallacy of familiarity.

Most of the words which we are very familiar with, such as mind, time, good, bad, idea, emotion, and exist, are the most obscure words in the language. They are too familiar to us, so much so, that we take them for granted. We assume that we know what they mean. It is important to treat such words as if we had never heard of them. It is important to ask questions about them as if we were children just learning the language. This is exactly what philosophers, scientists, and others do when they wish to be careful and critical in their thinking. We may call this *strange-making*. We make familiar things seem strange so as to gain insight and create humor.

3. Deviation from the Ideal, Humor

This is deviation from what should be the case, or from the best that one could be. It is milk that tastes like water, or marrying a stranger by postcard.

Before I got married I had six theories about bringing up children; now I have six children, and no theories. (Lord Rochester)

It would, however, be a fallacy to always expect absolute perfection.

4. Deviation from the Practical, Humor

We laugh at the impractical. Examples:

A door three inches wide and forty feet high.

An automobile that only goes backwards.

A cat that eats nothing but the heads of chocolate bunnies.

Why can't my right hand give my left hand money? - My right hand can put it into my left hand. My right hand can write a deed of gift and my left hand a receipt. - But the further practical consequences would not be those of a gift...(Wittgenstein)

5. Deviation from Purpose, Humor

Purpose is an intention or goal. Humor is created by harmlessly deviating from purpose. Purposelessness, if taken seriously, may lead to aimlessness and depression. If taken humorously it may lead to giddiness. It is a goalless state where anything or nothing, is done for no reason at all. We give up. It is to place a small circle on the floor and put a bean in it for no reason. It is to take a bus without knowing where it is going. It is like asking whether you would rather have coffee without milk, or without cream.

6. Deviation from Rules or Standards, Humor

Rule: Put i before e except after c. For example "conceit." But note the exception: weird.

Words such as "mischief," "naughty," and "escapade," suggest rule breaking, or doing what one shouldn't do. The rules violated may be social rules, such as, eating with only a knife or with one's fingers. (In India and some other countries, one is often expected to eat with one's fingers.) To misspell a word is to violate a rule. To create this kind of humor we need only to deviate or break any

kind of rule in a harmless way. If breaking rules is cruel and unintelligent, it will not be seen as humorous.

"I wonder, now, what the Rules of Battle are," Alice said to herself..."One rule seems to be, that if one knight hits the other, he knocks him off his horse, and if he misses, he tumbles off himself...Another Rule of Battle...seemed to be that they always fell on their heads." *(Through the Looking-Glass)*

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument,' "Alice objected.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less." *(Through the Looking-Glass)*

Can I say "bububu" and mean "If it doesn't rain I shall go for a walk?" (Wittgenstein)

7. Deviation from the Usual, Humor

"What are tarts made of?" "Pepper, mostly," said the cook. (Alice in Wonderland)

Ripley's book, *Believe It or Not,* is a record of examples of the unusual. If taken seriously, this kind of humor is regarded as "odd," "strange," "weird," or "unusual." Deviation from the usual is a breakdown of routine, habit, fixed thinking, or perception. Both metaphor and humor are based on deviating from the ordinary. They, thus, produce creative insight, as well as humor. It should, in fairness, be mentioned that such deviation can also produce trouble. Some examples follow:

Open a letter from the center of the envelope.

Open a can from the round cylinder side. (Could be dangerous as well as wet to do this.)

Green ants.
Have supper at 8 a.m.
To love cloudy days.
Eat pudding with your fingers.
Fry eggs in the shell.
Potato sandwich.
Cocoa skin sandwich.
Fried eggs with ice cream.

In Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno,* the garden is measured with a dead mouse.

And she went on planning to herself how she would manage it. "They must go by the carrier," she thought, "and how funny it'll seem, sending presents to one's own feet! And how odd the directions will look!

Alice's Right Foot, Esq.
Hearthrug
near the Fender
(with Alice's love)."

"How do I know that this color is red?" - It would be an answer to say "I have learnt English." (Wittgenstein)

All this time the Guard was looking at her, first through a telescope, then through a microscope, and then through an opera-glass. At last he said, "You're traveling the wrong way." *(Through the Looking-Glass)*

DEFENSE-MECHANISM HUMOR

Defense-mechanisms are illogical or distorted ways of thinking, acting, and perceiving in order to try to solve one's problems. *Anger* is a defense-mechanism. It is as if by becoming angry one can change reality by magic. Anger magic doesn't work. It doesn't change anything. Another defense-mechanism is to *rationalize.* This is to erroneously

distort a situation so as to make it into what you would like it to be. It is to "kid oneself." Defense-mechanisms seem to defend, but really don't. They are faulty ways of thinking. Because they are faults, we may consciously pretend to use them to create humor. Those who use defense-mechanisms without being aware of it, are not thinking clearly. They need help. In this sense, defense mechanisms are not humorous.

A few types of defense-mechanisms are:

1. Acting-out

This happens, for example, when you are angry with someone. Instead of talking about it, you "act out" by doing such things as breaking some dishes, doing strange things, or things you shouldn't do. It is a funny thing to act-out, because irrelevant action does not take the place of communication.

2. Compensation

An attempt to make up for a fault, for example, by being too nice. After punching someone, you say, "Here friend. Take this $10."

3. Rationalization

We twist the truth to serve our purposes. It is like wishful-thinking. Examples are:

You may have the gun on me but a special force could make that gun drop out of your hand, or remove the hand from the gun, or the hand from the arm, or maybe just leave me the bullets.

Well, I didn't want it anyway.

I couldn't help myself.

It's my job to be lazy.

4. Superiority

A weak person tries to look superior by pointing out faults of others. It may be to just state one's wished-for superior qualities. Examples:

"I'm wonderful."

"I have so much to give."

"You are really lucky to have me working here."

5. Denial

Pretend a bad experience did not happen. One might say, "Quiet, I don't want to know about what I did."

6. Fixation

To have fixed, dogmatic, or inflexible thinking. It is like giving the same answer regardless of what question is asked. Further examples are given under "stereotype humor."

7. Identification

Acting like a favorite hero, or another person, as if by so doing you will be him or her. Example: "Bill walks like superman." Eat cereal with a Tarzan spoon.

8. Intellectualization

Use of large, vague words instead of small, clear words. The word "intellectualization" is itself too large a word. Example: Instead of "I'm growing up," say "I am a contemporary youth progressing toward maturational and evolutionary adulthood."

9. Introjection

Your blame or hate for someone else is erroneously turned against yourself. Instead of realizing that you dislike someone else, you hate yourself.

10. Projection

You blame others for having faults which are really your own. If you fail, you blame others for their failure.

11. Reaction-Formation

Saying or doing the opposite of what you wish to say or do. In place of expressing hatred you show extra kindness. One may be especially stubborn for no reason.

12. Regression

Acting as you did once before, as in childhood. It is a false way of trying to escape from the present situation. For example:

When things get tough, I just put my thumb in my mouth and cry.

An adult plays with toys.

13. Repression

Distort or forget the truth because it is too painful. For example:

I was a perfect child.

14. Sublimation

Substitute one thing for another. For example:

A child may pretend to be an adult by putting on adult clothes.

15. Symbolization

Letting symbols represent things we have no evidence for. Example:

This ice cream soda stands for a spirit that protects me.

16. Transference

Transferring an emotion from one person, or thing, to another. You may like your dog and transfer this feeling to your brother.

17. Wish-Fulfillment

Make a wish and claim that it will come true, no matter how unlikely it is. Example:

I'm going to be the next president of two countries.

I will be the richest person in the world.

ESCAPE HUMOR

The truth I do not dare to know I muffle with a jest. (Emily Dickinson)

The greatest advantage I know, of being thought a wit by the world, is that it gives one the greatest freedom of playing the fool. (Jonathan Swift)

Now, for Brer Rabbit this is a favorite. Humor allows him to escape from all kinds of terrible situations. Humor allows us to escape from truth, criticism, fearful situations, contradictions, and embarrassment. Humor can put people at ease, even one's enemy. This is because humor requires one to accept the joke. If we can cause someone to laugh we can make them more accepting. It is only when one takes everything as serious, or fearful, that there is trouble and bad feeling.

EXAGGERATION HUMOR

Anything can be exaggerated: size, desires, actions, goals, even smallness. The "tall story" is a type of exaggeration. Examples:

This car is so fast it can go five hundred miles an hour in neutral.

I tackle the whole backfield, then throw out each one until I find the one I want.

Once upon a time there was woman who had three hundred children.

EXPANSION OF METAPHOR, HUMOR

All thinking is metaphorical. (Robert Frost, poet)

Whole works of scientific research, even entire schools, are hardly more than the patient repetition...of a fertile metaphor. (Kenneth Burke, literature critic)

Every theory, area of knowledge, philosophy, or science may be thought of as an expanded metaphor. Mathematics is a metaphor because it is to look at the world through the idea of numbers. To think of yourself as a number, is metaphor. Metaphor is to think of one thing in terms of another. The metaphor is then expanded. For example, the philosopher, John Locke, said that the mind is a sheet of white paper which we may write on with experience. Now, we may expand this by saying that we draw pictures on it, or crinkle it up. The result of expanding a metaphor can give insight, or produce humor. In this book, we expanded the idea, or metaphor, of Brer Rabbit's laughing-place. Examples:

Which drawer would a frog put his T-shirts in?

If logicians had their way, language would become as clear and transparent as glass, but also as brittle as glass: and what would be the good of making an axe of glass that breaks the moment you use it? (F. Waismann, philosopher)

"The land there is worth a thousand pounds an inch."
"Why, the smoke alone is worth a thousand pounds a puff!"

"Language is worth a thousand pounds a word!"
"I shall dream about a thousand pounds tonight."
(Through the Looking-Glass)

DEFEATED EXPECTATION, HUMOR

Wit: The unexpected explosion of thought (Edwin Whipple)

We are here led to expect one thing but are instead given another. We are surprised in a fun way. Now, when Brer Fox got to the laughing-place he expected to have a good laugh. Instead, he got tangled in a hornet's nest. It was his defeated expectation at which Brer Rabbit laughed. Brer Fox would have laughed too, but the bees prevented him.

Defeated expectation humor works *as if* our feelings are adjusted to one kind of thinking, but the story changes so quickly that our feelings do not catch up, and so we burst out laughing. Because this type of joke requires you to be surprised, you may not laugh at it twice.

The philosopher, Kant, wrote:

Laughter is an affection arising from a strained expectation, being suddenly reduced to nothing.

Examples:

It's safe. You can go through Central Park even at four in the morning - if you are a bullet.

Q. Would you like to hear a joke?
A. No.

Q. What bit your knee?
A. My brother.

The real truth of life is - to wash your feet once a week.

I learned a lot from the exam - how much I didn't know.

FALSE BLAME, HUMOR

This is false accusation. For example:

The cat stole the money.

Some people blame their dog or friends for everything that goes wrong. Most often we blame other people.

FALSE REASON HUMOR *(see also Riddle Humor)*

Q. Why did you climb the mountain?
A. Because it was there.

Q. Why did you remove your ring?
A. The room was too warm.

FALSE STATEMENT HUMOR

Humor may result from making a false statement. The false is presented as if it were true.

Tokyo is the capital of New York.

I made an airplane that can fly underwater.

Our chickens hibernate each winter in the pond with the frogs.

We made some water-balls.

I bit into an apple and there was a snake in it.

In my previous life I was an elephant.

FREE ASSOCIATION HUMOR

Freely connect all kinds of words or things. It is like Connotation Humor. Example:

If he connects

with death, and this was his idea, this might be interesting psychologically. (Wittgenstein)

GRAMMAR DEVIATION HUMOR

Here, all we have to do is know very little grammar, have poor punctuation, spell badly, and misuse language. It is to break grammatical rules. Now, we have been translating into good English what Uncle Remus said. What he actually said about the laughing-place was:

Brer Rabbit show Brer Fox de place, an' den tell 'im dat de game is fer ter run full tilt thoo de vines an' bushes, an' den run back, an' thoo um ag'in an' back, an' he say he'd bet a plug er terbacker 'g'in a ginger cake dat by de time Brer Fox done dis he'd be dat tickled dat he can't stan' up fer laughin'.

Tyme wuz dieing oll ohver the ruum. Wun plezhure iz that I do not kno whoat I xpekt to hapen too me.

UNEXPECTED HONESTY HUMOR

It can be funny to admit something we are usually ashamed of. For example, "I never was a very intelligent person," or "I think I was the least popular person in class." This is unexpected honesty. It is also a way to escape from being criticized. Suppose someone says, "You are not very bright." Then, you can reply, "That's true, I'm not." The reply is unexpected and disappoints the one calling names or criticizing.

It is honesty humor to say what you are really thinking, instead of covering it up, or pretending. Of course, people can be criticized for being too honest, even if no one is harmed by the honesty. The philosopher, Socrates, was condemned to death for his critical and honest inquiry. This, honesty humor can also expose harmful beliefs and dogma. Examples:

I like Wagner's music better than anybody's. It is so loud that one can talk the whole time without other people hearing what one says. *(Picture of Dorian Gray)*

I don't know who or what created the world, or if it was even created. Maybe it was always here.

"All your friends will be there." "I have no friends."

I wasn't poisoned by education. I never really had any.

I have the world's largest nose.

I have an inferiority complex.

Cancer cigarettes

Death cigarettes

Tombstone pizza

HOPELESSNESS HUMOR

Situation is Hopeless But Not Serious (A film title.)

Think in contradiction. Give up all possible hope. The hopeless, the futile, failure, the gallows, war, irrationality, ignorance, death, must be accepted as they exist. A broken leg is fact. Acceptance or adjustment to the hopeless, causes humor. If taken seriously, it leads to poor adjustment, depression, and suicide. When we are hurt, and accept that fact, we find that we sometimes laugh at our situation, the silly cast, bandages, or limp arm.

HYPOCRISY HUMOR

Actors are the only honest hypocrites. (William Hazlitt)

One may smile, and smile, and be a villain. (Shakespeare)

Hypocrisy is pretending to be what one is not. In some ways, everyone is a hypocrite. He or she uses cosmetics, or pretends, in some way, to be what he or she is not. We often try to appear to know more than we do. The beliefs and behavior in any town are typically contradictory and inconsistent. Hypocrisy humor exposes such inconsistency and pretense. It is another form of insight humor. It is a form of valuable criticism, and shows that the function of humor is not merely entertainment. Examples:

You ought never to do wrong when people are looking. (Mark Twain)

When a man comes to me for advice, I find out the kind of advice he wants and I give it to him. (Josh Billings)

The English public takes no interest in a work of art until it is told that the work in question is immoral (Oscar Wilde)

Everyone can master a grief but he that has it. (Shakespeare)

Our superstitions are better than yours.

It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it. (Upton Sinclair)

As philosphy grows more abstract we think increasingly by means of metaphors that we profess *not* to be relying on. (I.A. Richards, literature critic)

IGNORANCE HUMOR

We believe in nothing so firmly as what we least know. (Montaigne)

Most men had rather be charged with malice than with making a blunder. (Josh Billings)

1 + 1 = 3. I think that's right, but I haven't time to check it right now.

Ignorance humor involves being illogical, social blunders, false beliefs, pretending to know when you don't, making errors or mistakes, being naive, being tricked, being awkward, and so on. It is humor caused by some ignorance. It relates also to the *fallacy of ignorance*, that is, the fallacy of claiming to know when we do not know.

Belief in spirits, though we lack evidence for them, are based on the argument from ignorance.

The thought which produces ignorance humor is that one doesn't know what one is normally expected to know. It is this deviation which we laugh at. It is the absurdity of believing something without evidence.

Too close to this type of humor is ridicule. Ridicule is to laugh at ignorance, and is put-down and rejection. But ridicule is not humor. It involves negative emotion and seriousness. It is, therefore, not a type of humor. Ridicule belongs to negative emotions such as anger and revenge.

Ignorance humor may be kind, and involve no ridicule. We may laugh *with*, rather than laugh *at*. This would be more humane.

Ignorance humor is especially useful in criticism because it exposes faulty thinking. All types of humor expose faulty thinking. Examples:

Paint yourself into a corner.

Mispronounce words.

Counting sheep: One, two, three, one more, one more, one more...

He is a kitchen genuis. He boiled the egg without water.

There is a greasy thing under the hood which makes the car go.

After buying a soda: Well, I guess the directions are on the label.

Jane Martel *(Smashed Potatoes...)* presented the following child's recipe:

Scrambled Eggs
5 pounds of boiled bacon
2 pounds of eggs
3 pounds of ginger ale
1 fat
8 gallon of salt
4 pounds of pepper
1 knife of butter

First you open the eggs with your mittens. Use only the inside. Throw the rest in the sink. Put the eggs in a 10 pound can and cook the bacon in a plastic can. Get your pan real hot. If you get your pan hot first, you only have to cook for 2 minutes. But if the pan is not hot, you have to cook for 3 hours. Eat them in the morning or in the afternoon. And you will sure need some orange juice after.

Alice (in Wonderland) falls into a hole and wonders if she will fall through the earth to the other side of the earth where people, she thinks, walk with their heads downwards.

She also put her hand on top of her head to see if she was getting smaller or larger.

IMPOSSIBLE HUMOR

"I can't believe that!" said Alice.
"Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone. "Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes."
Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said: "one *can't* believe impossible things."

We may laugh when we are faced with the impossible. We see, or are asked to do, what is not possible. We can accept and laugh at the impossible. For example, we laugh at a small boy who complains because he does not want to grow, wants to walk to the moon, or tells his brother not to sweat in the house.

IMPROBABLE HUMOR

The unlikely is presented as if it were likely. Examples: Teach a dog tricks by telephone.

If you bet on horses you will make thousands.

Alice (in Wonderland) drank from an unlabeled bottle. It would seem that almost anything might happen. It did. She ended up a giant with one foot up the chimney and one arm out of the window.

INSIGHT HUMOR (Rational Humor)

"Any supreme insight is a metaphor" (H. Parkhurst)

Humor can make a statement and give insight. It may be used as a critical and scientific method of creating new knowledge. Such insight was discussed at the beginning of this book in the discussion about mind. We create insight and humor by combining unlike things. This is to create new metaphors. By creating metaphors we can gain a new perspective.

Metaphor involves all of the types of humor. The metaphorical method of inquiry is to juxtapose unlike things, reduce to the absurd, show hypocrisy; show that statements are circular, or contradictory; show that there is false logic or defense-mechanisms, show that there is ambiguity. That words are used in the wrong context, show how we can make mistakes by misusing language.

Humor and metaphor, then, are ways of doing science, philosophy, and each field of study. They are ways of clarifying thinking.

To explore a topic, all we need to do is start making jokes about it. We made jokes about mind earlier. In

other books in this series, humor is used to give insight into such ideas as emotions, ethics, and time. Philosophers often put things in a critical and humorous way and reduce them to absurdity. For example, "Is thinking like digestion?" The philosopher, Nietzsche, put things critically when he said:

Objection, evasion, distrust and irony are signs of health. Everything absolute belongs to pathology (illness).

IRONY

Four types of irony are:

1. *standard irony:* saying the opposite of what you mean. It is irony when you do or say something and then say, "I was just kidding." Examples:

In *Alice in Wonderland* the Duchess replies to Alice's statement, "Mustard isn't a bird," with "Right, as usual. What a clear way you have of putting things."

It must have taken a lot of work to make that mess.

2. *cosmic irony*: The opposite of the expected or ideal, happens. It is an incongruity. Example:

Humor is falling downstairs while telling someone else not to.

3. *dramatic irony*: a character in a play expects one thing to happen, but the audience knows something else will happen. Example:

You watch a character in a play risk his life to find a treasure box which you already know is empty.

4. *Socratic irony*: the philosopher, Socrates, pretended to be ignorant about a matter, but then by his careful

questioning, brought out mistakes in what people said. It was also irony that Socrates didn't know the answers to most of his own questions. One pretends to ask questions for information when one actually knows the answers. For example, after reading this book on humor you ask someone, "I wonder what humor is. Could you tell me?"

Further examples of these types of irony are:

The most absurd and reckless aspirations have sometimes led to extraordinary success. (Luc de Vauvenargues)

It is always silly to give advice, but to give good advice is absolutely fatal. (Oscar Wilde)

I'll say this for adversity: People seem to be able to stand it, and that's more than I can say for prosperity. (Frank Hubbard)

It is irony when Brer Rabbit tells Brer Fox that there is a laughing-place. It is a laughing-place for Brer Rabbit, but *not* for Brer Fox.

Untruth is a condition of life. (Nietzsche)

We use terms such as good, bad, time, mind, love, and anger, all the time, yet cannot define them or tell how they work.

The philosopher of the future must find himself in contradiction to his own times. (Nietzsche)

What is not verbally odd is devoid of disclosure power. (Ian Ramsey)

He has so many choices that he cannot decide between any of them.

To someone who says absurd things: "You really have a way with words."

An astronaut returns to earth and breaks a leg in the bathtub.

If you become a doctor, I'll eat ninety pies and a live pig.

The nice thing about you is your irrationality.

To someone who just made a terrible pun: "It's wonderful what you can do with words, isn't it?"

A woman leaves a man for teaching her how to love.

I'm wonderful. (When you are not.)

How should I know who took your pencil which is in my pocket?

The only important thing in the world is looks.

Why study philosophy? Who wants to know that much anyway?

The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something - because it is always before one's eyes.) (Wittgenstein)

JUXTAPOSITION HUMOR

Then fill up the glasses with treacle and ink, or anything else that is pleasant to drink: Mix sand with the cider and wool with the wine - And welcome Queen Alice with ninety-times-nine! (Through the Looking-Glass)

The word "art" comes from a word which means "to put

together." Juxtaposition is the art of putting unlike things together. We juxtapose things to create humor and metaphor. Two unlike words may be combined, or two unlike things may be placed side by side. In one painting, an apple is as large as a room. In another, a large rock floats in the sky. In a third, tiny men in black hats and with umbrellas replace raindrops, and rain down. One way of creating art is to combine unlike things in this way.

Juxtaposition asks the question, "What if...?" What if these objects were put together? What if a person were alone in the world - would there still be humor? What if you were born a kitten?

Juxtaposition is one of the main techniques of Dr. Seuss books. In one book the following are juxtaposed:

Feet in the morning.
Feet at night.
Low feet.
High feet.
Feet, feet, feet.
How many feet do you meet?
Slow feet.
Quick feet.
Trick feet.
Up feet.
Down feet.
Here come clown feet.
Here come pig feet.
Fuzzy fur feet.
Up in the air feet.
Over a chair feet.
Oh, how many feet you meet!

Other examples of juxtaposition are:

Ask children serious adult questions in order to have

fresh insight on a subject.

Horse power, flower power, nose power.

Large man holding a tiny teacup.

He was filled with pride and hamburgers.

Wear a price tag.

Try to spread hard butter on soft bread (Is this the trouble with most children today?)

Learn to write - on your arm.

OBVIOUS LIE

The big lie is more plausible [believable] than truth. (Ernest Hemingway)

"The more articulate, the less said," is an old Chinese proverb which I just made up myself. (Don Herold)

When we tell an obvious lie it is humorous because it defeats the whole purpose of telling a lie. Lies are supposed to be taken as truth. Obvious lie is a lie which is not a lie. The contradiction and deviation can cause humor. It is a defeated expectation, also, because we do not expect the lie to be given away at the same time.

One interesting thing about an obvious lie is that we can lie to escape or avoid punishment, but at the same time, *show* that we are lying. This allows us to avoid being dishonest. We lie and tell the truth at the same time. Like, irony, it is saying one thing but meaning another.

Another interesting thing about lying is that, in some ways, everyone lies all the time. If we greet someone with

"How are you?" he answers, "Fine," even if he is sick. We lie by not telling the whole truth about some things, such as sex. It would turn society upside down if everyone always told the complete truth in every way. In the courtroom, one is not allowed to tell everything, but only to answer the questions asked. And not all evidence, or truth, is even allowed to be considered. If one always tells the truth it may be impolite. We select things to say to people.

However, this does not mean that it is acceptable to tell a lie. If a lie is told, one should be able to clearly show that the effect of telling the lie is justifiable. For example, a doctor may tell a small lie to save the life of a child. It is not acceptable to lie merely to escape punishment.

Some ways of lying are to misuse language, be illogical, use vague words, believe things without evidence, or believe in mythical or mystical things. Examples:

I wrote the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

No, honestly, Tokyo is the capital of New York.

The fish was so big that the lake sank two feet when I caught it. (They were my feet.)

After eating a pie and with blueberries still around your mouth: "I didn't eat it. I was in the other room."

The cat must have stolen your bicycle to play with.

Child burps and says: "Something must have bit me."

Coach: "Get up now."
Player: "Oh, I thought I was up, coach."

LOGICAL FALLACY HUMOR

Logical fallacies are statements which are false, contradictory, or are arguments which do not follow from what is given.

All false statements can be seen as humorous, because they deviate from what is intelligible. We laugh at that which is irrational or what makes no sense to us.

There are many ways of making mistakes with arguments. These are logical fallacies. The following are a few of them. Nearly all of them involve the misuse of language. Logical fallacies may be thought to be kinds of deviations, and thus, kinds of metaphor. One logician, S. Morris Engel, in *With Good Reason* (1976) wrote,

"All fallacies...can be exploited for...humorous effects."

The clearer we are about how our ordinary, everyday language works, the better we will be able to think. Thinking is not having small, invisible "ideas" in our "minds." Rather, thinking is mainly being able to use language well. We also have images, but thinking is mainly language use. "Knowing," means to be able to *say* or write something about something. Tests are usually spoken or written. The more we know about how language can trick and mislead us, the better we will be able to think.

Throughout *Alice in Wonderland* Alice bumped her head up against the limits of language. She was misled by language. Examples of this were given under nearly every type of humor presented in this book.

And as for Brer Fox, he was misled by Brer Rabbit into thinking there was such a thing as a laughing-place. It

turned out to be only Brer Rabbit's laughing-place.

What is meant here by logic is not a logic of special symbols, computer languages, or a mathematical model. What is meant is showing that ordinary language as we speak it, is sometimes misused. It is misused by false analogies, category mistakes, misclassification, and using vague words. Some of the more well-known ways in which we make mistakes are the following. Of course, mistakes are made to produce nearly every type of humor. Politicians, teachers, college professors, and nearly everyone makes these mistakes quite often. When we read about these fallacies they may seem obvious. When we make these mistakes the fallacies are unknown. Anything that prevents us from dealing with the argument itself is a fallacy.

1. Abstractionism

This is the error of using overly vague terms. We should be able to reduce all abstract terms to concrete and intelligible terms. If we do not, then these terms will not make sense to us. The philosopher, Waismann, wrote against abstract terms:

"Examples are more convincing than an argument."

We can talk abstractly about humor, but it is more clear to give examples of each type of humor.

Abstract terms do not have meaning in themselves. For example, if we cannot define "love" and say what it means, then we will not know whether or not we are in love. Also we would not be able to love well, because we would not know what to do or how to do it.

In one sense, every word can be made more clear. But

some words are more vague than others.

The following is a quotation from a philosopher who uses vague and obscure language. It is not clear what he could possibly mean. Philosophers often try to avoid talking or writing like this. The following is by the abstract writer, Heidegger. You may think that it is humorous. It may mean little more to scholars than it means to you:

"Along with the formal structure of 'binding' and 'separating'...or, more precisely, along with the unity of these—we should meet the phenomenon of the 'something as something,' and we should meet this as a phenomenon. In accordance with this structure, something is understood with regard to something: it is taken together with it, yet in such a way that this confrontation which *understands* will at the same time take apart what has been taken together, and will do so by Articulating it interpretatively."

This language is almost unintelligible to anyone. It is not that technical and abstract words are scientific. Rather, they may be our most confused words. The above quotation seems to fit with what the philosopher, Cicero, once said,

"There is no opinion so absurd but that some...will express it."

To illustrate the use of over-abstract language, a student wrote, "My gastronomical satiety admonishes me that I have arrived at a state of deglutition inconsistent with dietetic integrity." That is, he ate too much.

2. Fallacy of Accent

The wrong word is stressed resulting in the wrong meaning. For example, "I cannot recommend the book too

highly." This may mean:

a) "I cannot recommend the book too *highly*."
or
b) "I cannot recommend the book *too* highly."
or
c) "I *cannot* recommend the book too highly."

3. Ad Hominem Fallacy

The *person* is criticized rather than the argument. Instead of dealing with what is said, one attacks the person who says it. Examples:

Instead of obtaining evidence of guilt, one says, "Just look at him. You can see he is guilty."

"I don't believe anyone who wears a hat like that."

"Are you going to listen to someone who only weighs 95 pounds?"

Instead of dealing with a student's question, a teacher says, "I see you have a lot to learn," or "How do you know? You're just a student."

It is a fallacy because we attack a person rather than deal with the argument. In short, only the arguments should count. Everything else should be irrelevant. The irrelevance creates a fallacy as well as humor.

4. All-Statements or None-Statements (Also "always" and "never" statements)

We often make "all" statements without checking to see if there are exceptions. We may say, "You are *all* wrong." But can one be *all* wrong, wrong in every way? The same applies to *none* or *no one*; For example,

"*No one* knows the answer."

"You are always late."

In *Alice in Wonderland*, the Caterpillar insists that Alice recited the poem, "Father William," not just not quite right, but wrong from beginning to end. It is not certain what it would mean to be *entirely* wrong. If it were entirely wrong, it would not be the same poem.

All is relative.

We can't know *anything*.

Nothing is more true than anything else.

No one has answers, only questions.

Everything is absurd.

Nothing is true.

5. Fallacy of Anger

People often become angry and attempt to win an argument by shouting. Anger is not an argument. It is cruelty and an abuse. We may find it especially humorous for educated people and people who should know better, to become angry, instead of presenting arguments. It deviates from rational behavior.

6. False Authority

It is not an argument to say that something is true because someone says so. Because a person is famous, does not make anything he or she says true. It is not an argument to say that a belief is true because the belief is

presented in a dictionary, famous book, or by a scholar. You, yourself, must know the arguments and reasons. Because some dentists say that a toothpaste is good, does not mean it is good. Because some doctors smoke does not mean it is good to smoke. Example:

"This chewing tobacco is best. It is used by movie stars."

7. Beg The Question (See Circular Humor)

This is a statement which assumes what it is supposed to prove. Example:

"Of course, there are ghosts or they wouldn't be all around us."

8. Changing the Topic, Fallacy

Perhaps the most important law of intelligent discussion is: Deal with one argument at a time, and do not go on to another until it is resolved. Most people seem to change the topic rapidly so as to escape from the argument. To do so is a fallacy. Example:

Brer Fox: "Is this the place?"
Brer Rabbit: "You'll have to do just like I tell you...I haven't got much time..."

"Do you have a mind?"
"Let's talk about swimming."

You want to know how old I am. That is an excellent question. How did you think of it?

9. Dogma

Dogma is holding a belief without having enough evidence. Dogma also involves unchanging and absolute views, such as the statement, "This is the only truth," or "This is the only way of looking at things." Examples:

"My view is the only true one no matter what you or anyone else says."

"Forget the arguments, I'm right."

"You don't need arguments. Just believe it."

10. Either-Or Fallacy

The fallacy of thinking something is completely one thing or its opposite. Something need not be true or false, hot or cold. It could be partly true. Something can be warm, instead of hot or cold. Example:

"The soup is too cold." "I suppose, then, you want it scalding hot?"

"Have you stopped beating your elephant?" Answer only "yes" or "no." If you say "yes," it assumes you have an elephant. If you say "no," it assumes you are still beating it. Both may be false assumptions.

11. False Assumption

We falsely assume something which was not presented. Example:

"When this finger heals, will I be able to play the piano?" "Yes." "Great, I never had a lesson in my life."

12. Fallacy of Suspicious Origin of an Idea (Genetic Fallacy)

It is a fallacy to assume that an idea is false (or true) because of the way it was arrived at. We ask, "Well, where did you get that idea?" It doesn't matter where you got it, or how you arrived at it, as long as it makes sense. Examples:

It is a fallacy to say, "He cannot be a good man for the job, because he is the only one who applied."

It is a joke, and irrelevant to say, "I bet you thought of that argument just now."

"I am real!" said Alice, and began to cry. "You won't make yourself a bit realer by crying," Tweedledee remarked, "There's nothing to cry about."

"If I wasn't real," Alice said—half laughing through tears, it all seemed so ridiculous—"I shouldn't be able to cry."

"I hope you don't suppose those are real tears?" Tweedledum interrupted in a tone of great contempt.

13. False Cause Fallacy

Because A happens before B, does not mean A causes B. Examples:

"I drank a glass of milk, and a bullet just missed my ear." "I wouldn't drink anymore of that milk, then, if I were you."

Alice...was sawing away diligently with the knife. "It's very provoking!" she said..."I've cut several slices already, but they always join on again!"

13. Faulty Question Fallacy (see Riddle Humor also)

A faulty or meaningless question is asked such as "Why are there cats?" or "Why?" or "What is being?"

14. Fallacy of Force

Forcing someone to a belief rather than presenting an argument. Example:

Might is right.

Don't argue. Remember who pays your salary.

Remember who pays your salary if you want anything to eat.

15. Fallacy of Hasty Generalization

We "jump to a conclusion" on the basis of a single or only a few instances. Examples:

"This tastes terrible. It must be medicine."

"Bob just gave me a pen. He is a nice person."

"It's a bad book. I just read one review of it."

"You dropped it. You can't do anything right."

16. Argument from Ignorance

Because we cannot disprove a belief, does not mean it is true. People often erroneously say that certain things are true because no one can disprove them. When we do not know how something works, people come along who claim to know of a complete mystical cause or reason for it. It is more honest to say, "I don't know." Examples:

I've never seen an airplane. There are no airplanes.

I don't know if, or how, the world was created. It must have been created by a superman.

Of course you have an invisible elf in your head. You can't disprove it can you?

Death must be wonderful. I haven't heard a single complaint.

"Dogs love to watch television." "How do you know?" "Well, can you prove they don't?"

17. Fallacy of Irrelevance

Any kind of irrelevance may produce humor. It avoids the argument. We may prove the wrong point, or continue talking without ever getting to the point. Example:

Q. Do you now have the history exam?
A. Yes, but I just drank some soda.

18. Fallacy of the Majority

Because most people think something is true does not mean it is true. Again, it is the argument which counts, not merely the fact that people agree with each other. We cannot vote truth in. Examples:

Last year 40,000 cats switched to "Meow" cat food.

All in favor of whether it is raining or not, raise your right hand.

Most people become angry, therefore anger must be good.

19. Many Question Fallacy (Complex or Double Question)
Asking two or more questions at the same time. For example:

"Do you always lie?"

This asks the two questions:

a) Do you lie?

b) Do you lie always?

"Who created the world?" is also a many question fallacy. It assumes that someone created the world, and also that the world was created. But the world was derived from things already here. It did not come from nothing. The question should be asked as two separate questions.

20. Miss the Point Fallacy (See Shaggy Dog Story under Personification Humor)
The listener misses the main point of an argument. Example:

"There is a fly in my soup."
Waiter: "Well, how much can a fly drink?"

21. Appeal to Pity
"I ask you, would you put this poor, lonely person in jail?"

"Give your evidence," the king repeated angrily. "I'm a poor man your Majesty," the Hatter began. *(Alice in Wonderland)*

22. Refusal to Discuss

"I'm right. That's all I have to say about it."

"I'd like to talk about it, but I have to get some fresh air now."

23. Simplistic Thinking

Oversimplification and inadequate explanations. Examples:

Everything is atomic.

All is mind.

Everything is stimulus and response.

Everything will be alright.

Everything is chemical.

Everything is mathematical.

All is roses.

24. You-Also Fallacy

Attempt to avoid being criticized by criticizing someone else. It is like saying, "I'm guilty, but so are you. So my guilt doesn't count." Example:

Sure, I stole the money, but you tripped your sister.

TAKING METAPHORS LITERALLY, HUMOR

Every man takes the limits of his own field of vision for the limits of the world. (Schopenhauer)

A metaphor has several meanings. When we take the wrong meaning it is humorous. Riddles and puns involve

taking the wrong meaning of words. So also do jokes such as the following:

I would horsewhip you if I had a horse. (Groucho Marx)

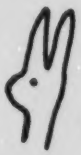
"Did you take a bath?" "Why, is one missing?"

Alice (in Wonderland) suggests that if one loses one's temper, her cat Dinah could help find it.

The March Hare invites Alice to "take some more tea." Alice objects to this invitation saying, "I've had nothing yet so I can't take more." The Hatter adds, "You mean you can't take *less*, it's very easy to take *more* than nothing."

Alice finds she is not too small to reach a key, and scolds herself as if she were two people. We do normally talk as if we are two people, but what do we mean? Are we misled by taking some of our expressions too literally? "Well," Alice says, "there's hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!" How many people are we really?

The trouble is that we tend to see things from only one point of view. We then think that that is the only way of seeing things. An example may illustrate this.



What is it a picture of? It is a picture of Brer Rabbit. But is that what it *really* is? Is that the only way we can see it? If you look carefully you will see a duck. It's beak

is pointed upwards. The beak is the ears of the rabbit. The figure is now a figure of a duck. This sort of thing happens all the time in the laughing-place.

But some people think that there is only one way of looking at things. They take their own theories, views, and beliefs as true—as the only way one can look at the world. To do this is to take metaphors literally. Each idea or belief we have may be thought of as a metaphor, through which we see the world. It is like seeing the world through the eyes of Brer Rabbit. To take that as the only way of seeing the world is to be captivated by a belief or metaphor. It is to take your metaphor literally. When you do this you create myths or false beliefs. There is both a duck, as well as a rabbit in the picture.

To know is to work with one's favorite metaphors. (Nietzsche)

Maps, diagrams, pictures, ideas, and theories are just models or metaphors with which to think about the world. The blue lines on a map stand for rivers, but they are not wet. Theories in science are just models. The models may change as we learn more. Do not think that any fact is absolutely true for all time. Even the best models do not describe reality. They partly *create* reality.

To take a model or belief literally is like having a prejudice. It is to take a view without realizing that there are other views. To believe that mathematics is the only metaphor or model through which we can see the world is to take a metaphor literally. There are many different geometries and each geometry gives a different view of the world. Mathematics, science, or any belief or theory is only one perspective.

It is like putting on different glasses. If we wear our Brer Rabbit glasses, all is rabbit world. If we wear our duck glasses, all is the world of duck. We have "glasses" for each subject we study in school, and for each thing we think or say. We have, for example, anger glasses, geometry glasses, literature glasses, biology glasses, foreign language glasses, critical glasses, or the glasses of a philosopher. We live in many worlds, and to think we see only one is to take a metaphor literally.

No one is exempt from talking nonsense; the misfortune is to do it solemnly. (Montaigne)

Thus it can be a humorous mistake to take metaphor literally.

What we have to do is to watch metaphors at work tricking us and our fellows into supposing matters to be alternatively much simpler and much more complex than they are. (I.A. Richards, literature critic)

Truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions. (Nietzsche)

A main cause of philosophical disease—a one sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example. (Wittgenstein)

Metaphor, then, gives insight, but creates humor if we take it too literally. It is a joke to think you have a mind as a thing. A few other examples of taking metaphors literally are:

Memory is a storehouse of ideas.

Mental chemistry.

His ideas got off the track.

On how to sing
the frog school and the skylark school
are arguing. (Shiki)

Officer: "You were doing forty miles an hour." Driver: "But I wasn't out an hour."

I'm a hot number.

Exercise your mind.

Swim down the stream of consciousness.

Time flies.
Save time.
Time marches on.
Spend time.
Kill time.
Beat time.
Waste time.

Imagine a language in which, instead of "I found nobody in the room," one said "I found Mr. Nobody in the room." (Wittgenstein)

Don Quixote became captivated by a model or metaphor and this weak man tried to be a great knight. His world was described by the author, Cervantes, as follows:

A world of disorderly notions picked out of his books, crowded into his imagination; and now his head was full of nothing but magic, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, complaints, loves, torments, and much of stuff and impossibilities; so much so; that all the fables and fantastical tales which he read, seemed to him now *as true* as the most authentic histories.

METAPHOR HUMOR

All thinking is metaphorical. (Robert Frost)

Every actor is a sculptor who carves in snow. (Lawrence Barrett)

No great artist ever sees things as they really are. If he did he would cease to be an artist. (Oscar Wilde)

Every custom was once an eccentricity; every idea was once an absurdity. (Holbrook Jackson)

All our truth...is won by metaphor. (C.S. Lewis)

Wild juxtapositions give insight and produce comic effect. (Charles Bally, linguist)

"You have taught generations of...students that for gaining an insight into life, a metaphor is a sharper and brighter instrument than a syllogism [a narrow logic]. (Said to Robert Frost when he received an Honorary Doctorate degree.)

An example of a metaphor is "Man is a machine." Metaphor is a combination of unlike things. Unlike things may be combined in many ways. The different ways they may be combined are shown in each type of humor. Imagery is metaphor combining unlike images. This becomes perceptual (or visual) humor. Metaphor is deviation of any kind. All deviation humor is, then, metaphor. In short, *all kinds of humor are kinds of metaphor.*

Metaphor often finds connections where none seem to exist. What seems to be unrelated and false is seen to be related in some way, and true.

Wit is the sudden marriage of ideas which before their marriage were not perceived to have any relation. (Mark Twain)

Thus, metaphors are entertaining. They seem to be one thing but turn out to be another. "Spread some jelly on your life," is a metaphor. It seems to be nonsense. But, if by "jelly," we mean "something sweet and good," then it means to enjoy life. The metaphor at first seems false, but then seems true in a new way. Examples:

Each word is a whole philosophy.

Two year olds are all metaphors.

Learn by osmosis.

Abstract words are often weasel words.

Pure mathematics is creating a coat with three sleeves.

Life is a sink full of dirty dishes.

Education is sometimes a snow job.

He drove me crackers.

Get crackered.

I'm just a brat of the morning.

Mind is a very thin fluid. (false)

He escaped. He must have had rabbit in his blood.

The German word for cotton is *Baumwolle*. It literally means "tree wool": a metaphor.

Birthday suit.

Man is language.

Sleep: a short vacation from life.

The blood of a grape.

Dazzling darkness.

Rusty ideas.

Abstract words are sandpaper to the eye.

Saliva is the Cadillac of the digestive system.

A rosy-cheeked thought.

Electricity: soda bubbling through small straws.

Linear thinking.

Square thinking.

Circular thinking.

'Tis deepest winter in Lord Timon's purse. (Shakespeare)

The algebra of emotions.

Ethical calculations.

Canned humor.

Shaggy dog humor.

What kind of glue holds this country together?

Is jealousy chemical?

We are walking chemical factories.

Alice: I wouldn't mind being a Pawn [in Chess].

This is a fine cup of tea.

The first few pages of science books are always missing.

Space is a box with no top, no bottom, and no sides.

Is a straight line rational, or emotional? It's rational.

A curved line is a person who does not tie her shoe laces or comb her hair.

The sunset is a deep question.

He is winding the watch of his wit; and by it will strike. (Shakespeare)

Imagine someone is trying on a hat...then a friend says "My dear, it's the Taj Mahal." (John Wisdom, philosopher)

MIMICRY HUMOR

To mimic is to imitate. The humor is in attempting to be what you are not. If we take mimicry seriously, it is not humor, but mockery or ridicule.

To mimic is often to exaggerate a fault or mistake. We may mimic the way someone looks, talks, walks, and so on.

MISCLASSIFICATION HUMOR

Things are put into the wrong class, or category, as

when a child calls a lion a "big dog," or talks of "cat feathers."

Alice (in Wonderland) says that mustard isn't a bird, so it must be a mineral. The confusion is due to the fact that she is trying to put everything into one of the three categories of animal, mineral, or vegetable. She finally says, "It's a vegetable. It doesn't look like one, but it is."

MISTAKE HUMOR

This is deviation from that which is correct, or from a standard. Mistake is involved in nearly every type of humor. Any sort of mistake may be a source of humor.

NAME-CALLING HUMOR

If you can't answer a man's arguments, all is not lost; you can still call him vile names. (Elbert Hubbard)

Wit is educated insolence. (Aristotle)

Name-calling is, by definition, false statement uttered as if it were true. You are called a "bear," but you lack the necessary nose and fur. But it is enjoyable to think of oneself as a bear, as having the fur of metaphor.

Name-calling may:

a) falsely describe. (stereotype)

b) be far-fetched.

c) involve mere connotations or secondary associations.

d) be poetic.

e) be positive and accepting.

f) be negative and ridiculing.

g) involve and exaggerate a fault or characteristic.

h) blame someone.

i) be partly true and partly false.

When the names ridicule, such as, "You twerp," they may not be seen as humorous. Any name may, however, be regarded as harmless and as fun. Friends often even call each other "moron." It is intelligent not to let names bother us. If we are morons, fine. What's wrong with that? And what could we do about it anyway? Everyone is a moron in some way or other. Some examples of name-calling are:

You green weed.
Hello, pizza parlor.
Hi, nice face.
I just saw Jim-well-I'll-put-it-off-until-tomorrow.
We call her, Charlie.
We call him, Vinegar.
El stupido.
You wart.

You thief, you beggar, you bag of meat, you tramp, you bum, you hog, you stick, you sponge. Could I borrow your eraser?

NONSENSE HUMOR

To an absurd mind, reason is useless and there is nothing beyond reason. (Camus, philosopher)

Even a joke should have some meaning. (Through the Looking-Glass)

Nonsense is what appears to make sense, but doesn't.

Nonsense is usually thought to be meaningless words, improper words or behavior, unimportant things or statements, or irrelevant statements. Example:

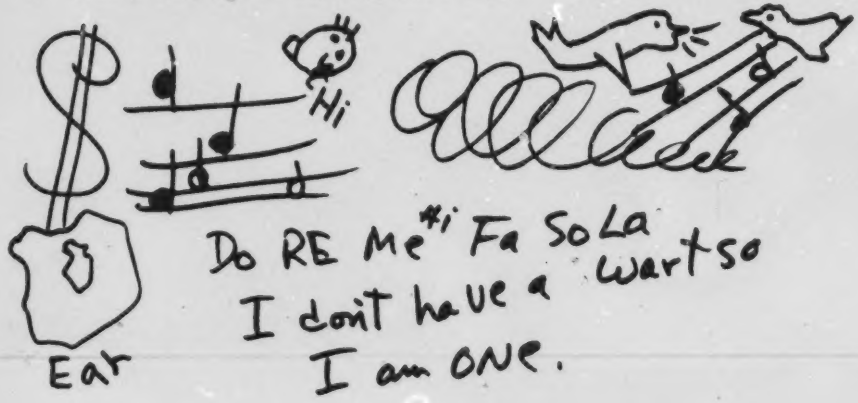
A child, with great care, butters his dog.

The thing about nonsense is that we do not understand it. For example, "Saturday stays up late." Nonsense is an escape from intelligibility, reason, and values. Nonsense, therefore, can give us a sense of freedom and escape. All rules and limitations are destroyed. With nonsense we can let ourselves go.

If we take nonsense seriously and as bad, it may be thought of as *absurd*. This negative view of life is shown in Shakespeare's words:

There's nothing serious in mortality. All is but toys.

Some examples of nonsense are:



Tuesdays are unlucky.

May your nouns last forever.

Wear gloves on your feet.

Put green bricks on the roof.

I would like some oolong tea if it doesn't take too ooo.

How many flies have you ever caught?

Tree with footprints.

Take vitamin N for nose.

Find an old letter from and to a stranger and send him or her a reply.

Wednesdays are confusing.

Gun bones.

Disgression is the bugbear of the obsolete.

Open this letter from the inside.

"When you say 'hill,' " the Queen interrupted, "I could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd call that a valley."

"No, I shouldn't," said Alice, "a hill can't be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense—" *(Through the Looking-Glass)*

OBVIOUS HUMOR

How wondrous this, how mysterious! I carry fuel, I draw water. (P'ang chu-shih)

Circular type jokes are examples of obvious humor. For example:

How to tell a joke: start at the beginning, go on to the middle, and stop at the end.

The obvious is well-known things presented as if they were new knowledge. The result is surprise. We do not expect to be told in detail what we already know. Saying the obvious is pointless information. Obvious humor involves describing any simple, familiar action, such as telling the average person how to drink water, or how to walk. Examples:

Q. What is warm in summer and cold in winter?
A. Just about anything.

How to boil water: First obtain a pan. Put water in the pan. Put the pan on the stove. Turn the heat on. There is a lot more to it.

PARADOX HUMOR

A paradox is a miracle of truth. (Gracian)

Consciousness is what it is and is not what it is. (Sartre, philosopher)

The artist is still a little like the old court jester. He's

supposed to speak his vicious paradoxes with some sense in them... (William Faulkner)

When my love swears that she is made of truth I do believe her, though I know she lies. (Shakespeare)

No man needs to search for paradox in this world of ours. Let him simply confine himself to the truth, and he will find paradox growing everywhere under his hands as ranks of weeds. (Thomas DeQuincey)

Metaphor combines unlike things, thus creating paradox. With metaphor, like paradox, we are asked to make sense out of nonsense. Paradox is a statement which seems contradictory, yet may be true. It is a mystery, something hard to explain, or understand. Humor is a happy paradox which we do not take seriously. Examples:

Humor is the least important thing in the world and the most important thing in the world.

Pen that can write inside out.

Liberty cannot exist until it is declared by authority. (Chesterton)

No choice is also a choice.

Language can only be described by means of language.

Emotion is rational.

Since there is no gate, let me tell you how to pass through it. (Zen saying)

When you have a staff, I will give you one, when you have none, I will take it away from you. (Zen saying)

Where no sea runs, the waters of the heart push in their tides. (Dylan Thomas)

Silent screaming.

Round square.

Much madness in divinest sense. (Emily Dickinson)

Ski tracks on either side of a tree.

All exact science is dominated by the idea of approximation. (Bertrand Russell, philosopher)

Can you wonder if there are 2467 people here, without the existence of numbers?

They all *thought* in chorus. I hope you understand what *thinking in chorus* means - for I must confess that I don't. *(Through the Looking-Glass)*

"Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin," thought Alice; "but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!" (Alice in Wonderland)

We find certain things about seeing puzzling, because we do not find the whole business of seeing puzzling enough. (Wittgenstein)

PERCEPTUAL HUMOR

What is decisive is a new way of seeing. (Waismann)

(Brer Fox thought he was now in the laughing place and was expecting to start laughing.) Brer Fox took a running start, he did, and he went through the bushes and the vines like he was running a race. He ran and he came back running, and he ran back, and that time he struck something with his head. (A beehive)... He struck it, he

did, and by the time he did that, he fetched a howl that you might have heard a mile, and after that, he hollered yap, yap, yap...and while this was going on, Brer Rabbit was thumping the ground with his hind foot, and laughing fit to kill.

With perceptual humor there is a deviation from what is usually sensed. We see a spaghetti sandwich, or a cat between two slices of bread. The inside of a milk glass is lined with fur. Most types of humor in this book can be used with perceptual humor. There can be visual, sound, taste, touch, or feeling humor. It is just a matter of deviation or making mistakes with these senses. Blue milk is a deviation from white milk. A mistake in sound or singing can be humorous. Music is often humorous because of sudden changes, exaggeration, contrasts of sound, mimicking sounds, playing different kinds of music together, and so on.

Perception is never pure. It always relates to language. We describe what we see, and we identify what we see in terms of our language. So perception humor relates to language humor. We may see someone step on a banana peel, but we need language to know what was done and that the slip was a mistake.

Both eyes and language are needed to see something. Seeing is always seeing-as. It is seeing in terms of one thing or another, or for one purpose or another. What we look for determines what we see. A child sees a candy store on a corner, where a policeman sees a dangerous intersection.

Everything we see has all sorts of associations or connotations. So perception can also be thought of as connotation humor.

Also, one sense relates to other senses. *The following examples combine two different senses:*

high sound
white noise
smooth sound
cool green
hot color
feel blue
blue mood
It smelled like Sunday.
Lively voices are yellow.
Blue is rational.
Curved lines are emotional.

Examples of visual humor are:

Dog slips on jello.

Umbrella blows out and reverses.

Smoke a pipe and eat at the same time.

Wear a long false nose.

Represent "worry" by a person with a flatiron on his head.

Woman with ribbon tied to her nose.

A fried egg half turned over, called a "sleepy egg."

Tree growing in the middle of a sidewalk.

Collection of pictures of different kinds of animal tails.

Tall, thin Don Quixote with his short, fat companion.

Melted ice cream.

A flat Brer Rabbit.

A man without a head.

Green pig.

Wilted carrot.

Air mail box twenty feet high.

Singer who colors her tongue blue.

Green sky.

Feed hay to a rocking horse.
Fiddler on a narrow steep roof.
Men with horse tails.
Tattoo of cat on one's chest.
Chicken sitting on round stones in its nest.
Sit in a garbage can.
Man with hangover wakes up next to a plate of spareribs and his girl is missing.
A book of all the different kinds of feet.
Dog half-clipped.
A bent watch.
Follow this arrow ⟶
A hand rises out of a small bucket.
A professor eating a lollypop.
Show a film backwards.
Stay in the bathtub until you look like a raisin.
Mouse chasing a cat.
Horses riding people.
British cat drinking a cup of tea.
A window standing in the middle of a field.
Making faces.
710 (look at this number upside down)
Pigs living in a beautiful new house.

Alice, to avoid the giddiness caused by the sudden vanishing of the Cat, asks the Cat to please vanish more gradually. The obliging Cat did so. Beginning with the end of its tail, it vanished slowly until only its grin remained. There was a grin without a face.

PERSONIFICATION HUMOR

Brer Fox said, "You said this was a laughing-place."

A leaf as it falls from a tree: "Now, I'll go this way, now that." (Wittgenstein)

"I didn't know that Cheshire cats always grinned; in fact, I didn't know that cats could grin."
"They all can," said the Duchess; "and most of 'em do." (Alice in Wonderland)

The human being never understands how anthropomorphic he is. (Goethe)

Anthropomorphic means one treats non-human things as if they were human. Personification means to treat things, animals, or insects as if they were persons. It's a mistake to do so, and so can produce humor. We can also falsely, and humorously, treat man as if he were a thing or robot. This is reverse personification, or dehumanization.

A psychologist who studies mice as if they were people is guilty of personification. Relating people who have language, to mice which do not have our language, can be a mistake. A mouse cannot be afraid of a revolution, because it does not speak English.

Examples:

Alice (in Wonderland) found herself in a strange, new world. Animals are able to talk there, but what rules apply to their conversing? Alice tries addressing a Mouse with "O Mouse." Alice talks to the Mouse as if it were a person. She called the Mouse, noticing that its face was pale with passion. And, of course, that is strange. What would a pale mouse's face look like, and what would passion be for a mouse?

It's enough to make a cat laugh.

Cells talk in their own little chemical way.

Cat logic.

The philosophy of cows.

Put yourself in cat's shoes. What would he care?

I would have him eating out of the palm of my hand.

The cat was so thirsty he dipped his tail into the coke bottle and sucked the end.

If you don't believe me, ask the cat.

Q. What do numbers eat?
A. Fractions.

Today the weather will be tempermental and angry.

The anger of the law.

People are often referred to as birds, bunnies, bears, rats, snakes, and so on.

Can fish see the snow? (Dylan Thomas, poet)

Alice (in Wonderland) tries to convince the Pigeon of her real nature. Well, who could convince a pigeon of anything?

Shaggy Dog Stories (Pointless personification jokes)

There are certain kinds of jokes called shaggy dog jokes. They are not just about shaggy dogs. In fact, they usually have nothing to do with shaggy dogs. We could call them shaggy Brer Rabbit jokes just as well.

A horse goes into a restaurant and asks for milk and

catsup. He says, "I suppose you think it strange that a horse comes in here and asks for that?" The waiter replies: "No, I like milk that way myself."

The waiter misses the point here. The strange thing is that the horse talks at all. Shaggy dog jokes are usually jokes like this. *They miss the point that animals do not talk or act as people do.* Thus these are basically personification jokes. Also they are like practical jokes because the listener expects a genuine solution, but is often given instead an absurd solution or pointless joke.

Shaggy dog jokes also use other types of humor. For example, they may:

a) have a pointless punch line.
b) have an irrelevant punch line.
c) be based on ignorance about animals' qualities or abilities.
d) be absurd.
e) tell of impossible events.
f) be long and drawn out with an absurd ending (usually told in a serious way)
g) be illogical. Conclusion or solution may not follow.
h) present the unexpected.
i) be a trick, hoax, or put-on.

Some examples of different types of shaggy dog humor are the following:

(Many of these are revised from examples given in Jan Brunvand's article on shaggy dog stories in the *Journal of American Folklore* 1963)

SHAGGY DOG JOKES BY TYPE:
ambiguity (shaggy dog)

A dog is lost and at great expense returned from England. But the owner of the lost dog then says, "My dog wasn't *that* shaggy." (That is, not *that* shaggy, and not that *shaggy dog.*)

A kangaroo said, "I haven't been feeling *jumpy* lately."

Brer Hare liked to catch mice and hit them on the head. A magician said he had better stop that, or the hare would be changed into a goon. The hare kept doing it, and was changed into a goon. The moral is: "Hare today; goon tomorrow."

behavioral (shaggy dog)

A horse sits down on grapefruit.

A horse sits on eggs.

context deviation (shaggy dog)

A dog eats food, plate, and cup, but doesn't eat the handle of the cup. Another dog said, "You are leaving the best part."

contradiction (see also "miss the point") (shaggy dog)

This arises when an amazing animal can do some human things such as talk. But the animal is blamed for some minor fault, and the amazing ability to talk is overlooked.

One horse says to the other, "Hey, look at that, a talking dog."

A dog was ticketed while driving, because it couldn't read the road signs.

"Your dog seemed to like that movie." "That's funny, because he didn't like the book."

exaggeration (shaggy dog)

A man in a bar keeps pouring drinks into his pocket.

The bartender wants to throw him out. The man offers to fight everyone. A mouse then comes out of his pocket and says, "That goes for your cat too."

Two kittens are hitched to a car to pull it out of a ditch.

A dog walks up a wall and across a ceiling. Someone says, "I never saw a dog drink beer like that before."

defeated expectation (surprise) (shaggy dog)

A horse pitches, catches and bats in baseball. When asked why it doesn't run when it hits the ball, the horse said, "Whoever heard of a horse running bases?"

A dog sent a telegram reading "Woof," nine times. It was told that it could send another "Woof" for the same price. The dog replied, "But that would be silly."

false cause (shaggy dog)

A boy has a golden screw in his navel. People ask what it is for. He finally takes it out and his bottom drops off.

A long drawn out story is told about a girl with a yellow ribbon around her neck and what it could be for. The story goes on and on, but we do not find out. The story ends when someone takes the ribbon off and her head falls off.

Flies stop walking when you remove their legs and say "Stop!" We must conclude, then, that flies have ears in their legs.

irrelevance (shaggy dog)

A dog enters a store and the clerk points to a sign which reads, "No dogs allowed." The dog then says, "But, I'm not smoking."

obvious lie (shaggy dog)

A rat asks a mouse if a certain nest is safe. The mouse says it is. The rat is caught by a cat, and says to the mouse, "I thought you said it was safe." The mouse replied, "Don't listen to me. I lie a lot."

A mouse caught in a vat of beer promises a cat it can eat it if the cat will save him. After being saved, the mouse runs off saying, "Don't believe what I said before; I was drunk."

take metaphor literally (shaggy dog)

A baby bull was going for a long walk with its parents. But soon the parents became tired while the baby bull wanted to go on. The moral is: "A little bull goes a long way."

A fly ate too much baloney. It then walked up the handle of a shovel. When it tried to fly off, it fell to the ground. The moral is: "Don't fly off the handle when you're full of baloney."

miss the point (shaggy dog)

It is quite unusual, but a pilot says he sees the same shaggy dog at several different airports hundreds of miles apart. His companion replies irrelevantly, "Oh, it's not so shaggy."

A cruel man tries to kill his shaggy dog, but the dog always returns after being shot. He tells a friend about the miracle. The friend replies, "Oh, it's not so shaggy."

"Isn't it amazing for a dog to come in here and order a soda?" "Well, it doesn't get another until it pays for the first."

"Isn't it amazing that a talking dog came in and ordered a steak?" "It usually orders a hamburger."

"Look, that dog came in, ordered, and ate an ice cream sundae." "It forgot to eat the cherry."

"You know, a horse came in and ordered ice cream and lemon juice!" "How it can stand that combination is beyond me."

A horse complains about its feet. The owner says to a friend, "There's nothing really wrong with them."

A horse tries to tell the owner how to start a stalled car. The owner laughs and says to a friend, "It doesn't know anything about cars."

A dog cycles to a supermarket and brings back groceries. It is then blamed for forgetting the lettuce.

A horse is sold because it puts cream and sugar in the coffee for the cowboys, and they prefer it black.

name calling (shaggy dog)

A man is surprised to find a horse tending bar. He asks, "What happened to the cow that used to run the place?"

nonsense (absurd or no point story) (shaggy dog)

One hippo says to the other, "I don't know why, but it has seemed like Thursday all day to me."

personification (shaggy dog)

(All types are personification. We can substitute people for animals in "miss the point" jokes and some other types of shaggy dog jokes. Talking animal jokes always involve personification.)

One fish asks another, "What are you doing on Thursday?"

practical joke (shaggy dog)

Because the joke is a hoax or put-on, it is a practical joke. Those who know that the joke is pointless laugh at the listener who does not know. It is like asking a riddle which has no answer.

pretense (shaggy dog)

A man says he has a cat to eat the mice his friend keeps dreaming of. The man protested, "But the mice aren't real." The other responded, "Neither is my cat."

reversal (shaggy dog)

Two cells lived in separate parts of the blood stream of a horse. When they get together they die. The moral is: "Don't change streams in the middle of a horse."

substitution (of words for other words) (shaggy dog)

One flea said to the other, "Shall we walk or take a dog?"

improper language (value laden terms) (shaggy dog)

A shaggy dog wins very many world contests. A judge then says, "He is not so shaggy." ("Shaggy" is a value term like "sloppy." One does not usually win a contest for being sloppy or shaggy.)

PRACTICAL JOKE

Brer Fox hollered yap, yap, yap, and ouch, ouch, ouch, and yow, yow, yow, and while this was going on Brer Rabbit was thumping the ground with his hind foot, and laughing fit to kill. (Uncle Remus)

Brer Rabbit played a practical joke on Brer Fox. He led Brer Fox to believe there was a laughing-place, got him to run like a mad fool through some bushes, and led him to bump his head on a beehive.

With practical joke we purposely mislead someone, or cause him minor trouble. If the trouble caused is too great, then it is no longer humorous. For humor, the practical joke must not be taken too seriously.

One type of practical joke is a put-on. We tell someone a false story or give false information for him to believe. April Fool's Day jokes are like this. Teasing is another form of practical joke.

Unless the event is very minor, practical jokes are usually a bit cruel. This may be one reason why Oscar Wilde wrote, "It is only the dull who like practical jokes." Practical jokes may often be a type of ridicule rather than humor. It is humor at someone else's expense. Examples:

Hide a friend's watch so that he thinks it is stolen. Then return the watch.

Make up a story about a new kind of electricity that can be held in your hand, liquid electricity, and so on. End up by saying it is only found in chocolate, and can be drunk as a milk shake. (Ironically, in science, many seemingly absurd things do turn out to be true.)

Be a nuisance.
Prevent someone from finishing a task.

Put a rooster in the house.
Constantly interrupt someone.
Put your finger in a just baked pie.
Purposely make a terrible drink.
Put rocks in someone's bed.
Nail someone's sneaker to a barn floor. (Don't do it.)
Send someone on a meaningless errand.

PRETENSE HUMOR

I wish I could tell you half the things Alice used to say, beginning with her favorite phrase "Let's pretend."
"Nurse! Do let's pretend that I'm a hungry hyaena, and you're a bone." (Through the Looking-Glass)

Our greatness lies in the supreme illusion. (Nietzsche)

"The higher aspects of life are based on noble delusions" (Hans Vaihinger, philosopher)

We pretend to be other than what we are. Pretense is fake, fiction, fantasy, hypothesis, make-believe, put-on, masks, mimicry, spoof. It can deal with fairies, elves, and things which never were nor could be. Actors pretend. Pretense is a kind of lie. But Santa Claus, elves, gremlins, dwarfs, and the little people, are fictions which can be fun and humorous. It is fun to pretend you are a rabbit or a duck.

But whenever anyone presents a theory of something, that too is a pretense or hypothesis. It is a perspective, model or metaphor. It is an as-if. When the scientist says, "Man is a machine," or "The world is atomic," he gives us a model or fiction.

We think in models or fictions. Thus, Nietzsche said that our greatness lies in being able to create fictions, hypotheses, or good metaphors. So, although pretense is

not absolutely true, it can give insight, or produce humor, or both.

REDUCE TO ABSURDITY, HUMOR

My aim is to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense.
(Wittgenstein)

Reduction to absurdity is reduction to humor. It is to show that a statement is mistaken, or leads to poor results. We make a joke about a belief to show that the belief does not make sense. Reduction to absurdity shows that what we usually take to be true is in fact false. It is to show the absurdity of a view. Examples:

If you need a mind to cause you to think then do you need another mind to cause that mind to think? This would lead to a need for more and more minds.

There are spirits in men. And are they in trees too? (Some do believe there are spirits in trees.)

It's not that he's orderly, but he lines up his spaghetti before he eats it.

If we were all the same we would all be reading this now.

To *express* ideas do you "press them out"?

If art is what artists do, then if an artist sneezes, it is art.

Does a chicken with a mind taste better than a chicken without a mind?

If you have one mind, why not also six minds?

If you think you have ideas in your head, are they like small, round marbles? Can you ever catch one?

If time passes, what does it pass? Does it pass like a car passes?

Do you really know what causes you to raise your arm? Is it a thought? How does it do it?

How could the world come from nothing?

How can something cause itself to be? Could you create yourself? Just start by making your hands?

If someone said to you "Seek the truth," where would you look? In a teacup?

If you believe in survival of the fittest, then wouldn't the most mean people survive?

It was found in studies with mice that human beings love cheese.

What we can't say we can't say and we can't whistle it either. (Frank Ramsay)

E. Esar in *The Humor of Humor* presents what he calls, "Chain Jokes." They may be thought of as reductions to absurdity. He gives the following example :

A guest of a wealthy English friend was asked what he would like for breakfast: "Tea, coffee, or milk?" He ordered tea. "China, India, or Ceylon?" the maid asked. "China," he said. "Black, green, or mixed?" she asked. "Black," he said. "Pekoe, Souchong, or Foochow?" she asked. "Pekoe," he said. "Orange, Broken Orange, or Flowering Orange?" she asked. "Orange Pekoe," he said, and thought the matter was finally decided. But the maid

was not through. "Milk, cream, or lemon?" she asked. "Milk", he said. "Jersey, Guernsey, or Alderney?" she asked. And so on.

REVERSAL HUMOR

Mistakes are good. Without them where would humor be?

We reverse a sentence, or reverse cause and effect. By turning things around it would seem that they would no longer make sense. Strangely enough, they often say amusing things when turned around. "Nothing (as an idea) was created from the world," may make more sense than, "The world was created from nothing." You have to have something before it can be gone, and so called "nothing."

To reverse things is also a way to explore ideas. It is to ask, "Could the opposite of what is, or is said, be true?"

One kind of reversal is when a sentence reads the same frontwards and backwards. For example, "Madam, I'm Adam," "Able was I ere I saw Elba," "Stressed—Desserts," "deed," "level," or "Mary Belle Byram."

Here are some examples of reversal humor:

Jim talking on telephone: "Hello, Jim, Jane here."

Don't put your spoon on your shirt, you might make your spoon dirty.

Don't let your studies interfere with your social life.

Cheese thinking of a mouse.

Run a film backwards.

Cheater is cheated.

Time your watch with an egg.

A new theory of evolution: Animals are descendant from people.

He didn't have too much cake. There was just not enough boy.

Cheese is made out of the moon.

"Do cats eat bats?" and "Do bats eat cats?" become interchangeable for Alice, because she could not answer either one. And because the Dormouse is always sleeping, his reversals are both true. That is, "I breathe when I sleep," is the same as "I sleep when I breathe."

The March Hare in *Alice* says, "Then you should say what you mean." "I do," Alice hastily replied, "at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know."
"Not the same thing a bit," said the Hatter. "Why, you might as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see!' "

"My finger is bleeding! Oh, oh, oh, oh!"
"Have you pricked your finger?"
"I haven't pricked it *yet*," the Queen said, "but I soon shall—oh, oh, oh!" (*Alice in Wonderland*)

RIDDLE HUMOR (The Humor of Questions)

O, ho, I know the riddle. (King Lear)

The question arises: Can't we be mistaken in thinking that we understand a question? (Wittgenstein)

Metaphors imply riddles. (Aristotle)

Remember the question at the beginning of the book: "Where is the laughing place?" So far we have tried to answer this question. But, now, it looks as if the question itself is a bit funny. One can get hooked by putting a question mark at the end of some sentences. Let's just fish around a little and see how this happens. So, forget the answers for awhile and we will ask what the questions are. "What is a question?" Are there really any such things as questions?

All humor is riddle already. It is something that seems not to make sense, something we must figure out, or solve. That is, humor always involves a deviation or mistake. Riddles always involve questions. Thus, to create humorous riddles all we need to do is to make mistakes with questions and answers. We can do this by asking faulty or nonsense questions, or by giving nonsense answers. Because all of these questions or answers are faulty they are metaphors, and not genuine questions and answers.

There are as many types of mistakes we can make with questions as there are types of humor. We may take any sentence or statement and make it into a question. We may take any type of humor in this book and make a riddle of that type. We need only put it in the form of a question. When we learn about riddles we learn something about how questions work and about how they can mislead us. An example of a pun riddle, or ambiguity riddle, is:

Q. What has a *hand* but doesn't wash its face?
A. A clock.

The question seems to be self-contradictory. But a way to make sense of it is to see that "hand" means a person's hand, or the hand of a clock. It is a metaphor and is ambiguous (a pun). If a clock *literally* had a hand, it would be a funny clock. It would be odd if this hand could not wash its face. But the hand of a clock can "sweep" its face. We speak of a sweep-second hand.

Thus, this riddle has in it the following types of humor: 1) pun or ambiguity, 2) taking a metaphor literally, 3) metaphor, 4) contradiction. But we may call it basically ambiguity, or pun humor.

It may be seen that because the question is so vague, very many answers could be given. For example:

Q. What has a hand but doesn't wash its face?
A. My little brother.

This would be ridicule riddle humor.

Types of Questions and Answers

There are many types of questions, answers, and riddles. Even the best scholars are quite confused about them. The more we know about how questions work, the better we will be able to understand and create riddles. But, also, the better we will be able to understand how questions work and how they can mislead us. Now, about questions:

Basically there are two types of questions and answers: 1) askable or answerable; 2) unaskable or unanswerable. "How old is this chicken?" is answerable. "Why is?" or simply "Why?" is not answerable. We don't know what is meant.

Here are some types of questions and answers:

1. Faulty question and genuine answer. Examples:

Q. Do you have a mind?
A. First tell me what "mind" means, then we'll see if we have one (or more) of them.

Q. What is nothing?
A. A contradictory question.

2. Genuine questions and faulty answer. Example:

Q. What happens when a girl swallows bullets? (Don't do it.)
A. Her hair grows into bangs.

3. Faulty question and faulty answer. (The question could be impossible to answer.) Examples:

Q. What is the difference between a rabbit?
A. One floppy ear is both the same.

Q. How do you square a circle?
A. Push out the four corners.

4. Faulty or genuine question, and no answer given. (This defeats the very reason for asking a question.)

Q. Why was the chicken under the chair?
A. (You are asked several times for an answer. The asker then says he doesn't know why.)

Q. Why are you here today?
A. No reason.

Alice (in Wonderland) suggests that the Hatter "might do something better with the time than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers."

The humor produced is due partly to the fact that a

question is asked as if it has an answer, but no answer was intended. This is to ask a non-question, or to ask a question and take it back suddenly.

5. Genuine question. Answer is genuine and possible but we do not know it. This is not faulty, or a mistake, so it does not produce humor.

6. Genuine question, but whatever you answer is rejected.

Q. Where did he go after his death?
A. It makes one think.

Q. What is Zen?
A. It is cloudy today and I won't answer.

Q. "Why did you do that?"
A. "Because I was late."
Q. "You see how defensive you are?"
A. "But you asked for a reason."

This technique is used to catch someone in a double-bind, or impossible, or contradictory situation. It is an attack, an attempt to try to overpower. It is often used in questioning prisoners. The prisoner is asked to confess something in particular. He will be executed if he does not. But he is not told what it is he must confess.

"Please, your Majesty," said the Knave, "I didn't write it, and they can't prove I did: there's no name signed at the end."

"If you didn't sign it," said the King, "that only makes the matter worse. You *must* have meant some mischief, or else you'd have signed your name like an honest man." *(Alice in Wonderland)*

7. A question (genuine or faulty) is answered with a question.

Q. What is the fundamental teaching of Buddha?
A. Is there enough breeze in this fan to keep me cool?

Q. Where do we go after death?
A. That's an interesting question isn't it?

Q. Why does a dog wag its tail?
A. Who would wag it for it?

Q. Why is the elephant wrinkled?
A. Have you ever tried to iron one?

Q. Take any number. Add ten. Subtract three. Are your eyes closed?
A. Dark isn't it?

Q. Why?
A. Why not?

Q. What is the basis of Zen?
A. Have you washed your dishes?

"Faulty" question here means that there are vague words used, contradictions, meaningless words, improper grammar, metaphors, and any mistake or deviation of types of humor discussed in this book. A faulty question is, "Does Zxpf4 exist?" Well, what is the answer? Be quick now.

All genuine questions have genuine answers. It is contradictory to say that a genuine question has no answer. That is why it is a joke to say a riddle (if genuine) has no answer. Our task in clarifying our knowledge is to first look for good questions before looking for answers. To do so is humorous because it is a deviation. We are

usually advised to just seek answers and not question questions.

Question humor works like other humor in that it breaks down our understanding. It asks or answers something unintelligible to us. Questions are asked which have no answers, and answers are given when there are no genuine questions. We ask the unaskable and answer the unanswerable. We expect one thing, or one answer, but receive another. This is defeated-expectation humor.

What Questions Ask For, or Express

Questions usually ask for 1) information, 2) a name, 3) a conclusion, 4) "W" questions: who, why, where, when, what, which and also how and how much?, 5) a solution to a problem, 6) a decision, 7) a reason, 8) an explanation, 9) an excuse (often a humorous, or faulty one), 10) a cause, 11) a purpose, 12) a classification, 13) a means, method, or way, 14) a possible hypothesis, model, or theory, 15) an opinion, belief, motive, intention, preference, or desire, 16) a comparison or difference, 17) its importance, 18) its meaning.

Questions also express or make statements which are not meant to be answered. We may think of this as metaphorical uses of questions. That is, we don't use these questions to ask something, but only to state something. Thus, they deviate from the main use of questions. Because they deviate, they are metaphorical.

Questions of this type may: 1) express sentences (called "rhetorical questions," not meant to be answered.) For example, "I like you a lot, don't I?" 2) express a complaint. For example, "How could you do such a thing?", or "Why did this have to happen to me?" 3) express surprise.

For example, "Well, what do you know?" 4) express bewilderment. For example, "What is the meaning of life?"

Misuse of Questions: Context Mistakes

We have just seen that a question asks for, or states, many different kinds of things. When we ask a question we usually expect a certain kind of reply. If we receive the wrong reply, it is a context mistake. If we ask, "How are you?", as a greeting, we do not expect the mistaken or humorous reply, "Well, my blood pressure is normal, but I could cut down on sweets." If you say "How are you?" someone may also reply, "That is an amazing story. Let's begin at the beginning..." This, too, is a context mistake. Also, "What do you know, Jim?" is not a request to tell the questioner all of the things you ever learned. That would also be a context mistake.

A question, then, may be answered in many different ways. A context mistake is made when the wrong sort of answer is given.

Meaningless Questions (Metaphysical, Ultimate, Mystical, or Empty Questions)

In some cases, it is not at all clear what kind of answer is wanted or could be given. Suppose someone asks merely, "Why?" That is certainly a riddle because we don't know what kind of answer, if any, is expected. To "Why?", the reply may be merely "Because." Something was asked here and answered, but it is not clear what.

Many questions we ask are meaningless. The way to answer some questions is to show they do not make sense.

We asked earlier, "Do we have a mind?" We saw the question was meaningless. "Who created the world?" is a trick question. It presupposes that someone did it, and that it was created. But it must first be shown that the world was created, and was not always here. It must also be shown that someone, rather than something, created the world, if it was created at all. "Who created the world?" is, then, a riddle, and a trick, or faulty question.

The case is this. If we have a question we wish answered we must know what would count as an answer. If none of the usual sorts of answers will do, then we are asking a meaningless question. It is a question for which there is no answer. It is an unintelligible question. We are asking for something which does not make sense. We erroneously think that just because we ask a question, it must have a meaningful answer. This is not so, unless the answer is, "Your question does not make sense." So, one way of solving some riddles, and mystical, philosophical, or scientific questions, is to show that the question does not make sense.

We can always ask "Why?" whenever we are given an answer to a question. We can ask "Why?" to that answer and "Why?" again, and so on. We never arrive at a final answer. That is a riddle. It is why we can always laugh at whatever reason or reply is given to a question. No question will be completely answered in every way. It is a mistake to assume that it will be completely answered. Questions about cause are especially misleading. Only if we knew everything there was to know, could we give complete answers. But it is not clear what the question, "Can we know all there is to know?" means. It is an odd

question to ask.

There is no such thing as *the* answer to a question. There are many possible answers. For a certain purpose, such as on a test, we only accept certain answers.

Questions, then, are sometimes meaningless. They may be false requests for evidence, or reasons. *Here are some examples of such questionable questions:*

What is life all about?
What do ants think?
What does it feel like to be you?
Why were you born?
Is the final answer a question?
Can we know everything?
What are you for?
Is the absolute red?
Why is there a bug under a building?
What is being?
Do you exist?
Why is a peach soft?
What should everyone do?
Why does the world exist?
Why is there something rather than nothing?
What is nothing?
Is it true that nothing can be understood?
How do you think?
Why do you think?
Why *really* are you doing what you are now doing?
What is real?
What does everything really mean?

Wittgenstein wrote that it is a misuse of language to say, "How extraordinary that anything should exist." *(Lectures of Ethics)*

Why weren't you a jelly bean?
Why?(Would you like a fun answer, or an answer a bee-keeper might give?)

Who knows?

How do cells *really* work?

What are the smallest particles in the world *really* like?

What *real* evidence do you have that you ever had a dream? (Remember, when you dream you must be asleep.)

Are two things ever really alike?

Would we think as we now do if we had never learned a language?

Is thinking like digestion?

Alice in Wonderland drinks from a bottle, and shrinks to a height of ten inches. She then wonders if she will snuff out altogether, like the flame of a candle. She asks, "I wonder what I should look like then?"

Presuppositions of Questions

When we ask questions we may assume (perhaps falsely) that:

1. You will receive an answer.
2. There is only one answer.
3. The question makes sense.
4. The answer will make sense.
5. The answer will be adequate.
6. Someone knows the answer.
7. A certain kind of answer is desired.
8. Everything has a reason or purpose.
9. Every question has an answer.
10. We already know what kind of answer we want.
11. The words in the sentence are meaningful.

These are assumptions we make, but they may be false assumptions. With riddle and humorous questions they are often false assumptions. For example, not all questions have answers. Some have many, not just one answer. Answers are often inadequate.

Types of Riddles: Examples

It was mentioned that there are as many types of riddle as there are types of humor. Here are some examples of the various types of riddle:

Ambiguity, or Pun Riddle

Q. Why is nothing funny?
A. Because there is no nothing.

Q. What three different things have eyes, are edible, help us to mend clothes and help keep us warm, but cannot see?
A. (The eye of a) potato, needle, button.

Q. Why don't you advertise for your lost cat?
A. Because it can't read.

Q. Which has more legs, a fox or no fox?
A. No fox, because no fox has sixteen legs, but a fox has four legs.

Q. How far can you run into the forest?
A. Only half way. Otherwise you would be running out again.

Behavior Riddle

Playing charades, where you guess at gestures, is like riddle.

Circular Riddle (Riddle which is obvious or assumes what is asked.)

This is called "begging the question."

Q. How do you ask a question?
A. With language.

Q. What can you be certain of if you wait a year?
A. You will be a year older.

Q. How can you tell if a cube has six sides?
A. Count them.

Q. How can you tell if a boulder is sweet or sour?
A. You have to taste it first.

Connotation Riddle (Relate things because of a quality.)

Q. What is the difference between a train and a teacher?
A. One goes choo-choo, the other says, "Take the gum out."

Context Deviation Riddle (Combine different sorts of things.)

Q. Why did you break the cup, Johnny?
A. It was caused by the unconscious mind in a dynamic interplay of psychic forces.

Q. Who discovered America?
A. Some peach.

Contradiction Riddle

Q. Can there be a round square?
A. Yes, a verbal one. I just mentioned it.

Q. What doesn't go, yet goes?
A. A good color scheme.

Q. What goes to water, drinks and doesn't drink?
A. A cow and a bell.

Q. How large is a geometric point?
A. As small as possible.

Q. How are an eagle and a turtle alike?
A. They both can fly except for the turtle.

Q. What has a tongue but no mouth?
A. A shoe.

Q. What two things have horns which make no sound?
A. A broken horn and a shoe horn.

Q. What is this? A man who is not a man, who killed and did not kill, a bird that was not a bird, with a gun that was not a gun?
A. Boy pretending to shoot a butterfly with a toy gun.

Q. "Is this a question?"

Q. "Which way is up?"

Escape Riddle (Use humor to say things we wouldn't otherwise say. "Neck riddles" if guessed, allow one to escape punishment and save his or her "neck".)

Exaggeration Riddle

Q. How many elephants can you fit in a small car?
A. None, it's too small.

Defeated Expectation Riddle (Something happens other than what is expected.)

Q. If you have five cents, spent two cents, and lost three cents, what would you have in your pocket?
A. A hole.

Q. What should you tell a man on a losing horse?
A. Change horses.

Q. What two kinds of children can play on a piano?
A. Boys and girls.

Q. What question do you always answer with, "Yes"?
A. What does y-e-s spell?

Q. In which month do children talk least?
A. February.

False Assumption Riddle

Q. If one horse is in the barn and one is in the field, which one is singing, "Don't fence me in?" (This is a "catch" riddle because it leads us to give the wrong answer.)
A. Neither. Horses can't sing.

False Reason Riddle (A false or over-vague reason is given.)

Q. Why did you break the cup?
A. It was cup breaking time.

Q. Why do elephants have flat feet?
A. From jumping out of palm trees.

Q. What are you doing?
A. Existing.

Q. Why do elephents have wrinkled knees?
A. From playing marbles.

Q. What kind of dog says meow?
A. A police dog in disguise.

Q. Why do elephants have round feet?
A. To walk on the lily pads.

Q. Why does she act like that?
A. Because she is wicked.

Q. Why did you spill the milk?
A. Well, who's perfect?

Q. Why did he do it?
A. He couldn't help himself.

Q. What are you doing here?
A. I'm just floating around.

Q. Why did he take his ring off?
A. Because he was hot.

Free Association Riddle

Q. What is big, gray, and lives in trees?
A. An elephant.

Blatant Honesty Riddle (Being honest when direct honesty is not expected.)

Q. Who made nut trees?
A. No one. They came from nuts.

Q. Who created the world?
A. I don't know.

Hypocrisy Riddle (Pretending to be what you are not, or to know what you don't know.)

Q. How does everything in the universe work?
A. It's force, invisible force.

Impossible Riddle (Faulty questions which are impossible, unaskable, nonsense, mystical, metaphysical, ultimate, meaningless, or empty)

Q. Why did the elephant lie in the middle of the sidewalk?
A. To trip ants.

Q. Why do elephants wear sneakers when jumping from tree to tree?
A. So they won't wake up the neighbors.

Improbable Riddles

Q. What is yellow, then gray, then yellow, then gray?
A. An elephant rolling down hill with a daisy in its mouth.

Insight Riddles or Questions

Wittgenstein once said that a good philosophy book could be written which consists merely of questions.

Do we know of anything in the world which does not change?

Why can we always ask, "Why?" to any answer we give?

Could the world be composed of unequal units?

Could we think without language?

What causes you to move your arm?

Do forces in themselves exist?

Does energy in itself exist?

If you cannot go into the past because it is gone, how can you know you remember the past?

How do you know you have ideas independent of language.

Do you have small ideas as such?

How can you put ideas into words or express them?

Do you ever catch a single idea? Can you count them?

Irony Riddle (Say the opposite of what you mean.)

"Of course you are a humble man, aren't you?"

Irrelevance Riddle

Q. What is the true nature of mind?
A. Look out of the window and watch the clouds.

Q. On January 4th, 1978 twenty people walked out of the post office. Why?
A. They had received their mail.

Juxtaposition Riddle

Q. What's gray and lights up?
A. An electric elephant.

Blatant Lie Riddle (Obvious or unexpected, open lie.)

Q. How did the patient take his liquid medicine without drinking it?
A. He drank it.
Q. But I thought you said he didn't drink it?
A. I lied.

Take a Metaphor Literally, Riddle (Take a metaphor as if it were literal.)

Q. Why did the man squeeze his shoes?
A. To see if he could hear a shoe horn.

Q. What can you serve but not eat?
A. A tennis ball.

Metaphor Riddle (All riddles are metaphorical.)

Several especially metaphorical riddles often given are the following:

Q. What is a lady in a boat with a yellow dress?
A. An egg.

Q. What is a house without a door?
A. An egg.

Name Calling Riddle

Q. Why won't you talk with me?
A. I don't usually talk to chickens.

Nonsense Riddle

Q. How can you tell if an elephant was in the refrigerator?
A. Look for footprints in the butter.

Q. What does Saturday eat?

Q. Why is elephant?

Q. Why was the chicken under the book?

Q. Do I exist?

Q. Why did the man shave his shoes?
A. Because he didn't want them to grow a beard.

Q. How do you catch an elephant?
A. Hide in the grass and make a sound like a peanut.

Obvious Riddle (We are led to expect new knowledge, but are given the obvious.)

Q. What lives in the river?
A. Fish.

Q. What has four legs, a wagging tail, and barks?
A. A dog.

Q. How does sugar taste?
A. Sweet.

Q. Where can you always find water?
A. In the dictionary.

Q. What did the hunter say when he saw elephants coming?
A. Here come the elephants.

Q. Why does the elephant have cracks between his toes?
A. To carry his library card.

Paradox Riddle

Q. How can there be fixed particles or objects if all we know is change? If everything is in motion how can there be things to move?

Q. Scientists speak of objects "at rest."
A. Can anything ever be really at rest?

Q. Is this a question?

Q. What grows bigger the more you take from it?
A. A hole.

Are we just someone's dream?

"And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"

"Where I am now, of course," said Alice.

"Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"

"If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out—bang!—just like a candle." *(Through the Looking-Glass)*

Personification Riddle

Q. What do frogs think?

How does it come about that this arrow ⟶ points? (Wittgenstein)

Q. Snapping your fingers as you move your hands around your head ask, "What's this?"
A. A butterfly with hiccups.

Practical Joke Riddle

Q. Would you like to know the answer?
A. There isn't any.

Q. Imagine string, glue, oatmeal, rocks, raw eggs. Do you have them all in your head?
When the reply is, "Yes" say, "I thought so."

Pretense Riddle

Q. Ask me if I'm a boat.
Are you a boat?
A. Yes.
Q. Ask me if I'm an airplane.
Are you an airplane?
A. No, I just told you, I'm a boat.

Reduce to Absurdity Riddle

Q. Why does your dog wag its tail?
A. No one else will do it for him.

Whatever cause or reason is given, you can always ask for a further cause or reason. There is no end.

Q. We say there is a force in a magnet. Have you ever seen a force in itself? (There is no such thing as a force in

itself. It is like a make-believe, invisible ghost.)

Q. Are we all part of one big mind? (The question makes no sense, because "mind" doesn't make sense.)

Reversal Riddle

Q. How is a locomotive engineer like a teacher?
A. One minds the trains, and the other trains the mind. (Whatever "mind" is.)

Q. What is the difference between elephants and fleas?
A. Elephants can have fleas, but fleas cannot have elephants.

Ridicule Riddle

Q. How do you keep a boy from stealing cookies?
A. Lock the jar and hide the key under a bar of soap.

Simile Riddle (Relate two things using "like," or "as." Could also show how things are unlike or different.)

Q. Why is skating like Chinese checkers?
A. Because you jump one marble after the other. (Nonsense)

Q. What is the difference between an elephant and peanut butter?
A. The elephant doesn't stick to the roof of your mouth.

"Are five nights warmer than one night, then?" Alice ventured to ask. *(Through the Looking-Glass)*

Sinking Riddle (Relate important and unimportant.)

Q. What did Paul Revere say after his famous ride?
A. Whoa!

Value Laden Riddle (Use improper, or forbidden value terms.)

Q. Why is an antique car like an old school room?
A. There are lots of little nuts and a crank up front.

Blatant Vice Riddle (Do a deliberate, mean act.)

Q. Why are there mirrors on chewing gum machines?
A. So you can see your expression when gum doesn't come out.

RIDICULE

When humor is meant to be taken seriously, it's no joke. (Lionel Strachey)

And just so. It seems that ridicule is not a kind of humor at all. Remember that humor is a mistake which we accept as not being fearful or bad. Ridicule states that someone has a fault and that it is bad. There is no humor in that. But ridicule can have a humorous aspect. We may laugh if someone in a new suit falls in the mud. In one sense, it is funny. In another sense, it is not humorous at all. If we enjoy the fact that that person fell in the mud, and make his mistake known to everyone, it is ridicule. We are attempting to put him down, or attack him.

Ridicule is laughing *at* a person, not laughing *with* him. Laughing at is not humor. It is anger, and an expression of frustration. Anyone who ridicules, shows that he cannot handle his problems very well. He is like a person with uncontrollable anger. Laughing at is a kind of illness which can be harmful to everyone involved.

Other words for ridicule also show that it is unac-

ceptable behavior: insult, smart alec, wisecrack, sardonic (bitter and mocking), sarcastic (hostile, cutting remark), make fun of someone, lampoon (a biting personal attack on someone), harsh criticism, and put-down. Thus, you may wish to remove ridicule from your language. To ridicule someone else just makes you look bad.

Some examples are:

Stand behind people and make fun of them.

I've heard of making a silk purse out of a sow's ear. In your case, they just made a sow's ear into a bigger sow's ear.

He is a bit of a musician and a bit of a lawyer. The musicians think he is a lawyer, and the lawyers think he is a musician.

Tell me, George (Gershwin), if you had to do it over, would you fall in love with yourself again? (Oscar Levant)

From the moment I picked your book up until I laid it down I was convulsed with laughter. Someday I intend reading it. (Groucho Marx)

If any of you think you are going to find (a use of a) word confusing, I wish you would drop out. Get something else to read, or better yet, get some exercise. (James Thurber & E. White)

Now, Brer Rabbit doesn't look too good in all of this. He not only played a practical joke on Brer Fox, he ridiculed and laughed at him, as well. So much for nice little children's stories!

SATIRE (Criticism)

What was said earlier under insight humor applies here. Satire is critical of anything we can be critical of. It uses humor to present the criticism. It exposes contradiction, inconsistency, hypocrisy, mistake, and harmful actions or belief. We can say things humorously that we could not get away with saying otherwise. Satire makes a point but, as humor, it does not have to be taken seriously. We may, in this way, joke or use loaded humor with our worst enemy.

Satire is not necessarily ridicule. Satire may just be offering an insight or point of view. Ridicule, however, is negative. If satire is bitter, or ridicule, it ceases to be humor.

Satire critizes superstition, the irrational, those who say one thing, yet do another. Political satire makes critical statements regarding political decisions. Satire exposes the vices, such as, selfishness, greed, excessive eating and drinking, vanity, and so on. Examples:

One honest claim for asprin: the pills are round.

A best seller is the gilded tomb of a mediocre talent. (Logan Pearsall Smith)

Man is superior to other animals: Only he can become egotistical and conceited.

Advertisements contain the only truths to be relied on in a newspaper. (Thomas Jefferson)

The most costly of all follies is to believe passionately in the...not true. It is the chief occupation of mankind. (H.L. Mencken)

SELF-ATTACK HUMOR

This is laughing at oneself. We humorously point out our own faults or mistakes. To laugh at oneself is to accept oneself, because humor requires that we accept. Thus we accept our faults, rather than take them too seriously. It does no good to feel bad about what cannot be helped.

A humorist is a man who feels bad but who feels good about it. (Don Herold)

It took me fifteen years to discover I had no talent for writing, but I couldn't give it up because by that time I was too famous. (Robert Benchley)

"You shouldn't make jokes," Alice said, "if it makes you so unhappy."

SIMILE AND ANALOGY HUMOR

Wit consists in knowing the resemblance of things that differ, and the difference of things that are alike. (Mme de Stael)

You done hear nuff tales er one kin' an' anudder fer ter make a hoss sick. (You have heard enough tales of one kind or another, to make a horse sick.) (Uncle Remus)

The philosopher contemplates things through the prism of language, and misled by some analogy, suddenly sees things in a new strange light. (F. Waismann, philosopher)

The philosopher, Aristotle, said that wit is the ability to make comparisons. Simile and analogy are comparisons between two things. They usually use the words "like," or "as," as in "Solid as jello," or "Fast as molasses." A simile is a type of metaphor in that it relates unlike things. The

comparison may use many other types of humor also. Parables and stories are often told in terms of likenesses of similar situations. Examples:

The head of Brer Fox was all swollen, and he looked *like* he had been run over in the road by a four mule wagon. (Uncle Remus)

Brer Fox ran around and around, and kept on snapping at himself [because of the bees] and doing *like* he was trying to tear his hide off. (Uncle Remus)

Mind is *like* a dark, black box.

The philosopher, Schopenhauer, said a cause is *like* a hired cab, because we never find a final and complete cause.

Duchess: "Thinking again?"
Alice replies, "I've a right to think."
"Just as much right *as* pigs have to fly," the Duchess concludes.

Fine *as* frog hair. (Ozark folk saying.)

He never reads the exam papers through because he believes that you don't have to eat a whole egg to tell if its bad.

The mind...is like the footprints of the birds in the sky. (Oriental poem)

Is mind like a thin fluid?

Her screams were so exactly like the whistle of a steam-engine, that Alice had to hold both her hands over her ears. *(Through the Looking-Glass)*

Q. Why are an elephant and the number "17" alike?
A. Both are different than the moon.

Celtic riddles often use simile:

Q. What is sweeter than mead (a wine)?
A. Intimate conversation.

Q. What is whiter than snow?
A. Truth

Q. What is softer than the wind?
A. Thought.

Q. What is sharper than the sword?
A. Understanding.

Other examples of simile are:

Regarding the question of people, I like them very much. Almost as much as a biscuit, and more than the leg of a chair.

Is "$E=mc^2$" like: "You can buy ten pennies for a dime"?

Of course, you must shine my shoes. $2+2=4$ doesn't it?

We say someone *created* the world. as we say someone *sipped* some soda. You could then equally as well say someone sipped the world.

That exam was like a piece of cake.

He is as slow as justice. (This is also satire or criticism.)

You eat like a _____. (Fill in these blanks with interesting things.)

You look like a _____.

You _____ like a duck.

Be quiet as snow.

What is it like to be a duck?

"What is it like?" is a basic critical question to ask. If we are given a vague theory, or words which are too large, then ask this question. If it is like nothing within our experience, then it may be rejected as being meaningless.

To marry a woman for her beauty is like buying a house for its paint. (anonymous)

There are brains in duck eggs. (That is, there are brains in young people.)

Useless as a screen door on a submarine.

Each hour is fragile, like eggs.

It's like this. They want more money. First they milk the cow and now they are after the blood.

A spaghetti joke—it's better on the second day.

Advice is like caster oil, easy enough to give but dreadfully uneasy to take. (Josh Billings)

Thurber did not write the way a surgeon operates, he wrote the way a child skips rope, the way a mouse waltzes. (E.B. White)

Asking for the meaning of a word is like asking for the meaning of a hammer. (John Wilson, philosopher)

One no more feels sorrow in one's body than one feels seeing in one's eyes. (Wittgenstein)

Wittgenstein also gave the following as false similes. They make one think critically:

I'm acquainted with Smith, is not like: I'm acquainted with my mind.

I multiplied in room 23, is not like: I multiplied in my head.

I calculated on paper, is not like: I calculated in my head.

A star flashed through the sky, is not like: A thought flashed through his head.

I observe actions, is not like: I observe my consciousness.

Memory, is not like: Looking down a telescope.

The meaning of a word, is not like: The illustration of a story.

Where are your pencils and books? is not like: Where are grief and sadness?

Where are your notes? is not like: Where are your emotions?

Bring me a glass, is not like: Bring me a concept.

Sadness is like walking down a long gray tunnel.

Simile and false analogy turn from being humorous, to being tools for critical thinking. Always ask about a

theory, or vague word, "What is it like?" and "Give me a specific example." These questions will show that many theories and words do not make sense. It may also give us new theories and insights.

SINKING HUMOR

Sinking, like metaphor, is putting unlike things together. In this case it is to combine the important and unimportant, the valuable and valueless. It is like reduction to absurdity. We sink an important person down to the level of the common man. It is like a professor with a toy in his or her pocket. One use of sinking is to show that all people are equally important, and that a president is, in many ways, no more important or valuable than each of us. Another use is to show that many things which we think are valueless, are the most valuable things there are. These are such things as watching clouds, the feel of water as we wash our hands, just walking, watching rain, or shaking someone's hand. Examples:

Spoken language is merely a series of squeaks. (Alfred Whitehead, philosopher)

Personally, if you ask me, I feel that we as a nation eat too much buttered toast. (Robert Benchley)

This will never be a civilized country until we expend more money for books than we do for chewing gum. (Elbert Hubbard)

You can see the morning breeze blowing the hairs of the caterpillar. (Oriental poem)

Out from the hollow of the Great Buddha's nose/A swallow comes. (Issa)

All the really good ideas I ever had came to me while I was milking a cow. (Grant Wood)

"Who are you?"
"I am one who eats his breakfast gazing at the morning-glories." (Basho)

Yes, there is a separate world of value and ethics: it's a world of vague words.

It's not what you do or say that really counts in this life. It's whether you polish your shoes.

Are you studying or just serving as a pillow for the cat on your lap?

Q. What did the Greek Gods eat for breakfast?
A. Wheaties.

Q. Why do people live and struggle to survive?
A. So they can crack jokes.

He has a college degree in making hamburgers.

He married her because she makes a peanut butter sandwich which is out of this world.

The history of noses.

A poem is words which do not extend all the way across a page.

The lover beckoned with a spaghetti fork.

I would have dined with the emperor, but I had to tidy up my sock drawer that afternoon.

STEREOTYPE HUMOR

The fixity of a habit is generally in direct proportion to its absurdity. (Proust)

Well, what do you think Brer Rabbit is like? Does he like carrots? Does he have a lot of little bunnies? Does he say, "What's up, Doc?" To treat Brer Rabbit like all other rabbits is to make a mistake. It is to treat all rabbits alike without looking at the differences between them. It is like the "all" statements and "simile" fallacies to say, "All rabbits say 'What's up, Doc?' " You know, I doubt if Brer Rabbit ever even said that.

Four types of stereotype humor are:

1. Repetition or habitual behavior.

A child is taken to a museum to see the pictures, and then to a movie. No matter where he is, he keeps asking, "When do we have some popcorn?"

A person keeps repeating the same answer, no matter what is asked. Q. "What do you think of our town?" A. "I have a son in college?" Q. "Well, where are you from?" A. "I have a son in college."

Some people keep stepping on the cracks in a sidewalk, or keep repeating the same words. This is sometimes called "compulsive behavor." It is as if one is forced to do the same thing over and over. A person may, out of habit, check for the mail even on Sunday when no mail is delivered.

2. Fixed and rigid ideas or behavior.

One's personality and actions are the same no matter

what the situation is. It is to do something only out of habit, not because it makes sense. The behavior is often an improper behavior or action. It is as if the person does not know any other way of acting. The individual cannot adjust to a new situation. Examples:

A man is like a phonograph with a half a dozen records. You soon get tired of them all. (George B. Shaw)

The comedian, Jack Benny, pretended to be cheap, or a miser. He humorously saw everything in terms of the fixed idea of cheating others out of a few pennies. He said once that he likes eating in restaurants because he always finds money under the plates (which the previous customer had left for the waitress as a tip).

A medicine man, no matter where he is, may try to trick or swindle someone out of something. A liar can be seen lying in almost any situation. Some other fixed personalities are those of a braggart, talkative person, opportunist, lazy person, someone who almost always sleeps, selfish person, mean person, someone who is nice to everyone no matter how bad others are to him; a professor who uses odd, large words, even when talking about everyday, common things; a person who cannot change or correct his or her behavior, someone who smiles all the time no matter what is said; typical behavior, and so on.

Stereotype is like a person who, in the words of Oscar Wilde, keeps on saying at the age of eighty, what he was told to say when he was a boy of eighteen.

A mechanic often slides under a car to fix it. When one mechanic retired to become a farmer, he began to milk a cow by getting under it as if it were an automobile.

When a person has fixed behavior he is predictable. We know what he is going to do next. It is humorous to watch it happen. For example, leave a bar of candy in a room of children and see how quickly it disappears.

A dog buries things it wants to dig up later, such as a bone. But then it starts to bury everything, books, ice cubes, and so on.

A thief is convicted for the eightieth time for stealing.

A mule becomes stubborn again and again and again.

A mother, who usually tells children to bicycle slowly and not to climb too high, says to her son who is now a pilot: "Be careful son, fly slowly and stay near the ground."

A child, who thinks that everything has a father asks, "Do paperbags have daddies?"

Someone who thinks that cleaning with soap is always good, says, "The lettuce should be good, I washed it with soap and water."

A telephone operator was at a party. When someone said, "Hello" she said, "This is a recording. The number you have reached is not a working number. Please hang up and try again."

In *Alice in Wonderland*, the Queen has the same solution for every crime, even if it is not a crime: "Off with their heads." It is like putting people in jail as the fixed solution to any kind of crime or problem.

3. One kind of fixed idea is to hold too strongly to a belief.

It is to become captivated by a model or metaphor. It is like being hypnotized into a belief. We see things from the point of view of only one basic idea. A lawyer may talk of everything in legal terms. He thinks that when Santa Claus comes down the chimney he is "breaking and entering."

An engineer may sit around drinking liquid oxygen, thinking about the amount of heat it takes for time to pass. When someone says, "105 degrees," he replies, "Does not compute."

4. Stereotype is also a simplistic, inadequate, or uncritical description of a person or thing.

For example, we stereotype people in terms of their *occupation, race, or role.* We wrongly think that all women do not know how cars work—that they think there is perhaps a large, dark, furry thing under the hood.

A policeman said, "I tried to fix the washing machine, but I'm a policeman, not a repairman." The other man replied, "Then why didn't you shoot it?"

SUBSTITUTION HUMOR

The process of substitution is an excellent aid in untangling fallacies. Whenever a term appears suspicious...a new term should be substituted for the suspicious one. (Morris Engel, philosopher)

We substitute humorous words for the usual or expected word. Wittgenstein talks about the:

Misunderstandings concerning the use of words,

caused...by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language. Some of them can be removed by *substituting* one form of expression for another.

By substituting one term for another we can clarify the meaning of the term. If we find that time is just change, we can substitute "change" wherever we have a time word. For example, instead of "Time passes," it would be more accurate to say "Change changes." Instead of "We time a runner with a clock," it would be better to say, "We compare the change of the clock with the change of the runner." For clarity we should be able to *substitute* a concrete term for any abstract or vague term.

For "mind" we could substitute "pocket" to show that "mind" is a strange idea:

He has ideas in his pocket. (instead of in his mind)
He lost his pocket.
He has a brilliant pocket.
What's on your pocket?

But to create humor, we substitute the wrong term, or an odd word. Examples:

The best things in life are $25. (instead of "Free")

He is old enough to know *worse*. (instead of "better") (Oscar Wilde)

He hasn't a single redeeming *vice*. (instead of "virtue") (Oscar Wilde)

I am *dying* beyond my means. (Oscar Wilde)

"Give your evidence," the king repeated angrily, "Or I'll have you executed, whether you're nervous [instead of "guilty"] or not." *(Alice in Wonderland)*

Alice overhears the Rabbit say, "Oh, my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!" And here one may suppose this is how a Rabbit would say something similar to our: "Oh, my goodness, how late it's getting!"

I'm going to go play college. (For "I'm going to college.")

To the best of my love. (ability)

Why can't he act his age, rather than his shoe size?

Instead of asking for a fried egg, ask for "A bloob with goo around."

He gave her a look you could have poured on a waffle. (a sweet look) (Ring Lardner)

The Near East to you.

"Euphemism" is substituting an acceptable word for an unacceptable word. It avoids facing an unpleasant idea. It may also be denial, hypocrisy, or dishonesty to do so. Example:

Cemetery means *"Sleeping* place."

"Put the animal to *sleep*," instead of "Kill the animal."

SYNECDOCHE HUMOR

A type of substitution. Substitute part for whole or whole for part. Examples:

Do you have wheels (a car)?

TICKLING

Tickling is more like touching, more like a physical, body reaction than humor. However, humor may be involved in how one is tickled. For example, we may build up the expectation of being tickled. It is interesting that we can't tickle ourselves, but must be tickled by someone else. This suggests that being tickled must involve some kind of thinking, and is not merely feeling. Also, being afraid can prevent ticklish feelings.

TRICK

Brer Rabbit played a trick on Brer Fox.

As mistake and falsity, most humor is some kind of trick. It rests in being fooled. Practical jokes, especially, are tricks. Illusions trick us. A crook may try to sell us gold painted bricks as real gold. You buy a sandwich, but inside it you find a note which reads, "This is good meat."

UNDERSTATEMENT HUMOR

The opposite of exaggeration humor. Understatement is the error of saying too little. It was understatement when Mark Twain said that the reports of his death were exaggerated. It is understatement to say, "In the days of the caveman, books were very scarce."

Irony can be understatement when we say the opposite of what we mean. For example, instead of "She is an excellent singer," say, "I've heard worse."

USELESSNESS HUMOR

This is an extreme form of deviation from what is practical and from purpose. Things are said or done which are

useless. Examples:

The King recites from his book, "Rule Forty-two: All persons more than a mile high to leave the court." *(Alice in Wonderland)*

Believe in a view even though there are no good arguments for it, and excellent arguments against it.

Disorder and chaos are useless. We often find disorder and messes, humorous.

Feather soup.

Butterfly milk.

Cherry flavored T-shirt.

Buy dog food because it is on sale, even though you have no dog.

Edible basketball.

I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it. (Harry S. Truman)

VALUE DEVIATION HUMOR

"Impropriety is the soul of wit." (W. Somerset Maugham)

Value deviation occurs when we deviate from what people think is right or wrong, good or bad; or from what people should or should not do. It is to be outrageous. It is "taboo" humor. It is saying what is impolite. The topic of this humor is unpleasant for many people. It is therefore sometimes called, "sick humor." Examples:

Spit games.

Come and see my cockroach collection. It takes an hour, but is well worth the while.

Bathroom jokes are value deviations.

I believe I smell as good as most people.

Give a friend a coffin as a present.

Child who splashes around in a mud puddle.

Finger and toe sniffing.

Jokes about races, physical deformity, violence, and so on.

Soldiers often joke about the danger of war. Mort Sahl, a humorist, said, "I found in the Army that the grimmest of times brought forth the most humor."

Shakespeare wrote about the experience of holding the skull of a friend:

Alas! Poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio...Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? Your gambols? Your songs? *(Hamlet V)*

In a French cartoon by Maurice Sinet, a woman is shown carefully eating the brains of her husband, as if it were a melon.

A sewing machine on an operating table.

The famous writer, Jonathan Swift, wrote:

A young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled, and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee, or a Ragout. (Do not listen to Swift. Get a regular cookbook.)

The English essayist Charles Lamb, when asked how he liked children, replied, "Boiled, Madam."

In art, people are drawn with the heads of goats, hogs, birds, snakes, and so on.

Value deviation humor may also be about religion, killing, death, and sex...or all the things which it is supposedly impolite, or considered wrong, to talk about. It is humor which shocks people.

We need not take value deviation humor too seriously. We need not worry about it. The greatest writers use it, and many people tell such jokes. Humor, as humor, cannot hurt people, regardless of what it is about. This is because, for something to be humorous it must be a mistake, or deviation, which we accept, and which is not fearful. If it is humor, we accept it. We can, then, tell religious jokes, sex jokes, or any kind of joke, *as long as no one takes it seriously.* It is important not to tell such a joke where anyone may take the joke seriously or be hurt by it. It is safest if race jokes are only told by people of that particular race. It is also safest to tell such jokes only when no one will be hurt. But, unfortunately, almost anyone can take almost any joke too seriously and become angry.

The principle of taboo or value deviation humor is often this. We are not supposed to talk about something, for example, sex. But we may want to talk about such things. So we make a joke about it, because jokes are acceptable. The joke sneaks in the subject of sex. Sex or *taboo jokes allow us to talk about what we are often not allowed to talk about. Thus, value deviation humor:*

a) Violates rules without seeming to.

b) Helps make the improper proper.

c) Makes the unpleasant pleasant.

d) Presents a contradiction by presenting the pleasing and the horrible together. (Called "grotesque")

e) Produces a sudden surprise.

f) Allows an escape and relief by finding a way to say, or do, what we are not allowed to.

g) Is an acceptable way of breaking rules to express our wants.

Again, the trouble with this type of humor is that people are often offended by it, and so do not find it humorous. But there is no reason why we cannot laugh at the humorous part of such humor as long as no one is offended. We usually do.

FORBIDDEN VALUE TERMS AS HUMOR

Instead of "He talks," we can say, "He blabs." "Talks" is objective and descriptive. "Blabs" is a negative value term. It means that someone talks *too much* and that that is *bad*. "Blab," then, is a value term.

What applies to value deviation, or taboo humor, applies to this type of humor. It can be unkind and ridiculing, rather than humorous. But such terms are often used in fun only. They are not intended to hurt. They are "risk" words, because other people may take them seriously, or as insults.

Here are some examples of forbidden value terms.

Again, they may be fun and funny terms, but they may also be very hurtful.

Objective Words	*Forbidden or Value Words*
Instead of saying:	We say:
person	jerk, creep
small person	twerp
thin	skinny
keeps	hogs
spill	slosh
moved	jerked
pulled	yanked
quiet	dead
move quietly	sneak
talk	jabber
be inactive	mope
make music	make noise
group	gang
policemen	cops
boy	kid
take	grab
misbehave	naughty
very bad	terrible
very bad	awful
deep throat sound	grunt
sound	noise
put it in	stuff it in
put	cram
concert music	tunes
dirt	filth
throw	toss
knock on the door	bang on the door
the plants	the weeds
to cut	to butcher
bite	crunch
sip	slurp
one who teases	twit

eat	gobble
wait	stick it out
swallow	gulp
poor	lousy
bad person	rat, skunk
short person	runt
stubborn	pig-headed
mistaken person	fool
talk	twaddle
not neat	sloppy

The words in the right column are unacceptable value words. They ridicule. They are humorous as well.

The Terrible End